

# VICTIMS AND VILLAINS: MIGRANT VOICES IN THE BRITISH MEDIA

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# Victims & Villains

## Migrant voices in the British media

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Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations



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## Executive Summary

### Context

Increasing migration and its implications for the UK's economic prosperity and social structures are a significant concern for the British public. The factors underlying public anxieties regarding migration are complex but can be seen in the dominance of migration issues on the agendas of most of the political parties and the rise in support for the populist United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) over recent years. Negative stories on migration are reflected in, and reinforced by the British print media, in particular the tabloid press, often painting a picture of Britain as a country which is 'full up' and unable to cope with the changes that migration brings.

Over recent years, concern about levels of anti-immigrant sentiment in Britain and the role of the media in driving negative coverage of this controversial topic have fuelled efforts by a number of civil society organisations to create spaces for alternative perspectives which can inform the public debate. This has included, in particular, efforts to support migrants to have their voices heard through media training, capacity and network building activities, as well as creating opportunities for engagement with journalists working on, or interested in, migration issues.

The report explores how migrant voices and experiences are framed in Britain's migration debate, against the backdrop of a complex relationship between the media, political debate and public attitudes. Were the voices and experiences of migrants present in media reporting on migration issues in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election? And if migrants were able to have a voice, how were their experiences and perspectives represented and framed?

### Our approach

The report draws on an analysis of 648 migration-related stories in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers published in the period leading to the 2015 General Election, when it was widely anticipated that migration would be a particularly salient issue. These articles were subjected to a framing analysis. The term 'frame' refers to the ways that speakers and writers construct arguments about certain topics. By framing, they link the topic to other events and issues and make value-judgements about its implications and impact on society.

Studies have defined a myriad of migration frames, but common across them is a distinction between **victim** frames, presenting migrants as victims of inequality and/or discrimination and in need of support to overcome it, **benefit** frames, highlighting the contribution (real or potential) of migrants to the host society, and **threat or villain** frames, presenting migrants and migration as a challenge to people's jobs and /or security.

Alongside the framing analysis we interviewed representatives from eleven organisations working to engage migrant experiences and voices in the migration debate and held focus group discussions in Glasgow, Birmingham and London with 60 migrants from a range of countries and backgrounds.

### Migration in the media: issues and frames

The evidence from our research shows that whilst migration was less of an issue in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election than many had anticipated or feared, it was not absent from public and political debate or from the printed press. Coverage of migration was diverse and varied, involving a range of right and left wing perspectives and intersecting with an array of other issues. **The newspaper which published the most migration articles was The Guardian** (149 articles), followed by The Times (137), The Daily Mail

<sup>i</sup> The term 'migrant' is used throughout this report to refer to people who move from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions. It includes those coming to the UK for work, to study, to join family members and in search of international protection.

(104) and The Daily Telegraph (98). **The newspaper which published the least on migration was The Mirror** (28 articles).

There was also a wide range of issues addressed including the Mediterranean migration crisis, EU free movement, the economy, employment, housing, healthcare, illegality, migrant detention, deportation, migrant voting intentions and others. The issues that emerged as particularly important during the pre-election period were **the number of migrants entering the UK** (13% of all the articles analysed **and the views of the UKIP leader Nigel Farage and his party's potential impact on the election outcome** (15%). As the election drew closer **the Mediterranean migration crisis** also came to occupy a highly visible place in the print media, accounting for 12% of the articles published in the final two months of the campaign period.

Although the British print media covered a wide range of migration issues in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election, there was considerably less variation in the way that migration and migrants were framed. **Nearly half (46%) of all the articles framed migration as a threat and migrants as actual or potential 'villains'. A further 38% of the articles were rooted in the victim frame.** This was particularly evident in relation to the large number of articles on the Mediterranean migration crisis, many of which used emotive language to set out their calls for action to improve living conditions in countries of origin and to help the desperate people who were willing to risk their lives at sea. **Only 10% of articles framed migration and migrants as a benefit, principally to the economy.**

### **Migrant voices in the media: victims and villains**

The absence of migrant voices as sources in the media can deprive the audience of a complex or nuanced understanding of migration issues. It can also have negative consequences for migrant integration and for the personal well-being and security of migrants and their sense of belonging. This, in turn, can undermine the extent to which migrants feel that they belong in British society, even when they have been living in the UK for a long time.

Existing research has found that the voices and experiences of migrants appear in just 8%-12% of migration stories in the print press. Many previous studies have also emphasised that migrants are presented in a narrow range of ways, using terminology which repeats negative stereotypes presenting migration as a 'problem' to be solved and/or migrants as 'passive victims' in urgent need of our help.

Of the articles that were analysed in this research, **only 15% referenced a migrant voice or perspective.** There was considerable variation between newspapers in whether or not a migrant voice or perspective was included in a migration story. **27% of the articles from the Independent referenced a migrant perspective, rising to 33% in the case of the Daily Mirror. By contrast, 97% of the articles from The Sun did not provide a migrant perspective.**

We found clear evidence that migrant voices are **more likely to be included in stories which tend towards more positive, sympathetic or humanising portrayals of migration** and a majority of these presented the migrant as a victim in need of sympathy and support. By contrast **migrant voices are less likely to be present in stories which tend towards more negative views of migration and migrants.**

Victimhood can be beneficial, as evidenced by the important role that migrant voices played in the campaign to end the indefinite detention of migrants and asylum seekers. **5% of all migration stories in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election were related to detention,** with nearly half of these articles containing direct quotes from migrants. The campaign sought to capture the attention of audiences by telling moving personal stories about life in detention and it was widely regarded by the stakeholders who participated in this research as a success. Personal testimonies of suffering and injustice in detention contributed to the impact that they were able to achieve.

### Migration stereotypes vs complex reality

A perception that the British media is largely negative in its representation of migration and presents migrants as ‘villains’ was shared by those who participated in our research. Indeed, it is often the negative stories that stick in peoples’ minds more than the positive ones. This may contribute to the ways in which being portrayed as a villain in public debate can have a damaging impact on migrants’ sense of belonging in Britain.

**Victimhood brings its own challenges.** Many migrants find the experience of sharing traumatic personal experiences with the media difficult and unsettling, because they are required to recall emotional experiences and can feel misrepresented. Others expressed concern that giving voice to migrants as victims relies too heavily on emotional reactions which do not necessarily contribute to a balanced and well-informed public and political debate on migration, nor to good policy making.

Most importantly **the concentration of migrant voices in victim frames does not reflect the varied lives of migrants who live in the UK.** Migration and the experiences of migrants are largely represented as ‘exceptional’ rather than as a normal part of contemporary British society. There is a lack of media interest in the everyday experiences of migrants who work and study in the UK. And if migrants are, or become, successful they are no longer viewed as ‘migrants’ at all but are instead defined in terms of their professional skills and experiences.

A narrow view of migrants as victims may **reinforce dominant stereotypes** in ways that are not helpful in the longer term. This is because they communicate the idea that migrants repeatedly need help from their host society, potentially undermining public solidarity. Indeed, public opinion on migration in the UK has continued to be largely negative today despite the presence of these victim voices in the press during the months leading up to the 2015 General Election.

### Towards an alternative framing paradigm?

Our research raises important questions about how migration and migrants are represented in the British media, the extent to which migrant voices and experiences can be heard and the way in which the perspectives and voices offered by migrants are represented and framed. It also suggests that if the migration debate in the UK is to be more balanced, it must reflect **a wider range of evidence, views and perspectives.**

The challenge, then, is how to encourage, persuade and support the British media to reflect the varied and diverse everyday reality of life in a society of migrants and migration without emphasising exceptionalism or reflecting stereotypes. A ‘balanced debate’ will not simply position migrants as either ‘victims’ or ‘villains’ but will engage with a wide range of views from different nationality, ethnic, class and other groups. Showing the normalcy of migrants’ everyday lives may provide a basis for greater social solidarity and integration with British citizens.

Change will require all of those with an interest in developing a more balanced migration debate to critically reflect on their role in shaping the ways in which migration is understood and how they engage with, and frame, the voices and experiences of migrants within that debate. This includes political leaders, journalists and those working on the ground to support migrants to tell their stories and to engage the media – and others – to hear what they have to say.

But ensuring that the voices of migrants from a wide range of backgrounds are represented in the British media is not a simple or straightforward process.



The report identifies a number of **barriers to a more nuanced representation of migrant voices and experiences in the British printed press**. Although migrant-led and other organisations play an important role in facilitating access to migrants willing to talk about their experiences, this process can be time-consuming and difficult particularly in the context of modern-day news cycles.

At the same time migrants themselves may be reluctant to talk about their experience because of trauma, for fear of retaliation, being identified as an asylum seeker, or worries about how speaking out might personally affect them.

**Organisations working with migrants to engage with the media will need to be supported to continue their work.**

However, increased and more diverse representation of migrant voices in the British media will require migrant-led organisations to look beyond the exceptionalism of specific experiences of migrants and address the British media in the range of social and political issues that affect migrants and British citizens alike. In order to engage the British print press – and in turn the British public – in a more balanced understanding of migration issues and the impact of migrants on life in Britain, the debate needs to be broadened to include issues of social justice, fairness and human rights for all.

It is also clear that organisations working with migrants will need to **coordinate their efforts** in order to maximise on the opportunities presented by the media and to be able to proactively (rather than reactively) engage with journalists.

The influence of migrant-led and other organisations on the content and framing of stories in the media is not simply a question of giving journalists what they want here and now. It is also about **understanding how the media works** and providing different newspapers with access to a range of migrant sources and experiences which resonate with its existing themes and the interests of its readers.

**“ I feel that we have been excluded from it, completely. We are not even treated as voters. So, we are just those people being talked about. Some talk about us but we have no statement. They are talking about our rights, our service and our lives ” (Migrant, Birmingham)**

## 1. Introduction

Increasing migration and its implications for the UK's economic prosperity and social structures are a significant concern for the British public. The factors underlying public anxieties regarding migration are complex but can be seen in the dominance of migration issues on the agendas of most of the political parties and the rise in support for the populist United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) over recent years. Negative stories on migration are also reflected in, and reinforced by, in the British print media, in particular the tabloid press, often painting a picture of Britain as a country which is 'full up' and unable to cope with the changes migration bring.

Over recent years, concern about levels of anti-immigrant sentiment in Britain and the role of the media in driving negative coverage of this controversial topic have fuelled efforts by a number of civil society organisations to create spaces for alternative voices to be heard in the public debate. This has included, in particular, efforts to support migrants to have their voices heard through media training, capacity and network building activities, as well as creating opportunities for engagement with journalists working on, or interested in, migration issues.

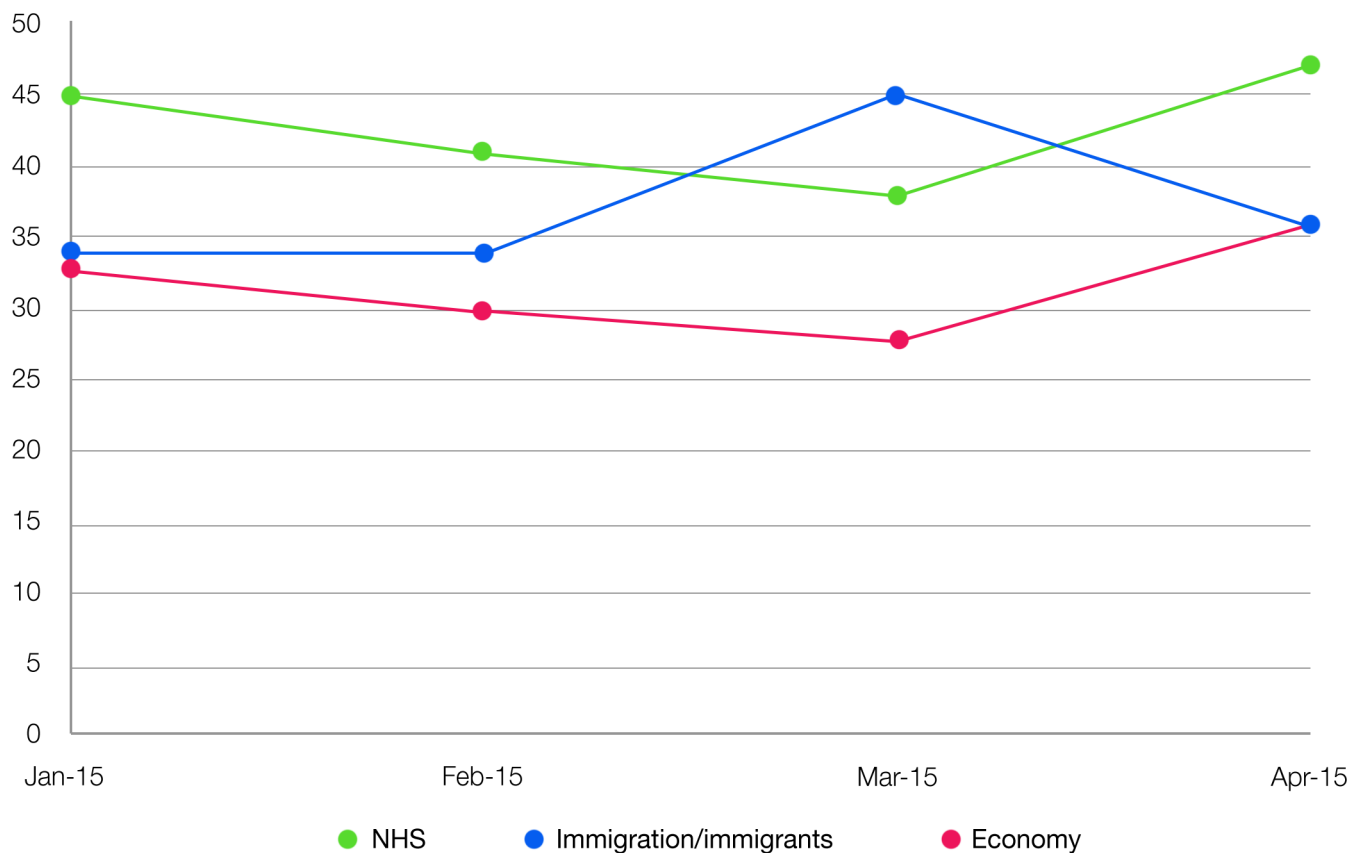
This report examines the presence of migrant voices in the British media. We want to uncover whether migrant voices were able to inform the reporting of migration issues in the run-up to the 2015 General Election, when migration was widely anticipated to be one of the most salient and controversial issues on the political agenda. Were the voices and experiences of migrants present in media reporting on migration issues or were migrants 'just those people being talked about'? And if migrants were able to have a voice, how were their experiences and perspectives represented and framed?

### 1.1 The political and media debate on migration

Over the past two decades migration has been an issue of significant concern to the British public (All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration 2011, Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014, Ford and Goodwin 2014) with British voters described as holding 'more negative views on immigration than in comparable countries' (APPGM, 2011). Although the salience of migration has varied over the years, the general trend in surveys during the 1990s and 2000s has been one of increasing concern, with a shared view across social groups and geographical locations that levels of immigration to Britain should be lower (Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014). This was reflected in a YouGov poll for The Times conducted in February 2015, which found that 75% of respondents considered immigration to Britain over the previous 10 years to have been too high (Kellner 2015). During the months leading to the 2015 General Election, migration was consistently recorded as one of the top two issues in the Issues Index surveys gathered by Ipsos Mori.

Politicians and party leaders from across the political spectrum have responded to rising public anxiety about migration by making repeated efforts to demonstrate to the public that they are serious about reducing the scale of inward migration and controlling the country's borders. In particular, the Conservative Party promised during the 2010 election that they would reduce immigration from the hundreds to the tens of thousands. Net migration levels to the UK have nonetheless remained persistently high. The perceived failure to control immigration has political consequences; in 2014 over 70% of the population considered the government to have done a very poor job (Transatlantic Trends 2014), and public confidence in the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats on migration duly declined (Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014: 109).

Three most important issues facing Britain today (Ipsos mori) (% of top mentions)



In reality however, both public attitudes and the factors that shape them are more complex and nuanced than this overview suggests. The British public is, for example, much less eager to reduce the amount of people arriving with high levels of education and skills, paying to study in universities or investing in Britain. They are also more likely to view people from Germany, India, or Australia as having made a positive contribution to the UK than people from Romania or Nigeria. And their views are often based on vast over-estimates of the scale and impact of immigration in Britain. As YouGov's Peter Kellner (2015) suggests, the key to making sense of public opinion often lies in the difference between the way we view the people and the issue: 'When we think of immigrants as individuals, we often see the way they enhance our neighbourhoods, public services and wider economy. When we think of immigration as an issue, we link it to government failure, economic insecurity and Britain's decline from greatness'. In other words, attitudes towards migration may have little or nothing to do with migration at all but may instead be a way for people to articulate and express concern about a much wider range of issues associated with societal and

even global change (Crawley 2009, McMahon 2015).

It is clear that the public holds a range of different and sometimes contradictory views on migration and migrants in Britain. But whilst considerable resources have been invested in measuring attitudes, rather less research has been directed at understanding which of these views comes to the fore in public debate at different points in time and why some are emphasised over others. To do this requires us to examine who engages with the debate, how and with what consequences.

Political parties and the print media have an important role to play in this process. The factors underlying public anxieties are often reflected in, and reinforced by, the representation of migration issues on political agendas and in the media (Crawley 2005, 2009). Studies have shown how political parties can emphasise anti-immigrant views by linking immigration with issues such as economic concerns or a sense of being 'left behind' by the country's political and economic elites (Dennison and Goodwin 2015).

There is also a large body of research that explores the representation of migration in the media. In the United States it was found, for example, that two thirds of magazine covers on the subject of migration were 'alarmist' and negative (Chavez 2001). More recently, an international review has claimed that when journalists cover migration issues they often fail to tell the full story and routinely fall into propaganda traps laid by politicians (Ethical Journalism Network 2015). One of the observations of previous research is the absence or under-representation of migrant voices in the media (Bloemraad, de Graauw and Hamlin 2015). In Britain specifically, the public debate on migration has usually seen views from one of two distinct perspectives; one perspective vociferously claims that political leaders have repeatedly brushed the issue under the carpet, avoiding engagement with peoples' concerns for fear of giving credence to controversial views, whilst the other, in contrast, fiercely criticises political leaders and the press for concentrating only on negative aspects of migration and giving credence to discriminatory, xenophobic views.

Migration is a hugely complex issue which elicits a wide range of views and strong positions on controversial topics from identity to ethnicity, religion, employment, welfare, education, housing and many others. Yet what is often missing from the noise and the fear is the perspective of migrants themselves.

In the wake of the 2010 General Election a number of organisations and social movements including, but not limited to, Migrant Voice, Migrant Rights Network, Migrant Forum, Movement Against Xenophobia and Women for Refugee Women have sought to address this imbalance. They have aimed to create capacity and confidence within migrant communities for their voices and experiences to be articulated, and to develop relationships with the media that can enable alternative views to be presented. Others including the Migration Observatory and British Future have tried to engage the media in the complexities of contemporary migration by providing detailed and accessible empirical evidence and by linking debates around migration to wider issues of identity and 'Britishness'.

Many of these organisations are of the view that the public debate on migration should be more balanced, representing a range of views and accurately reflecting the evidence on the scale and impact of the phenomenon. At the same time, they are concerned that the negative content of migration-related stories in the media is, in part, a reflection of a lack of migrant voices as sources, interviewees and staff in newsrooms. Securing the inclusion of migrant voices and experiences in the British media has since been viewed by these organisations as an important and necessary step in the development of a mature, balanced and nuanced migration debate.

**“ Migrant Voice is migrant-led organization and was set up in 2010 just before the 2010 general election because a group of us were concerned about the way that the migrants were discussed in the media. There weren't enough migrants' voices heard but there is a lot of negative rhetoric ” (Stakeholder)**

**“ We work to empower women who have sought sanctuary in the UK to speak out about their own experiences to the media, to policy-makers and at public events. We aim to give a voice to women who are all too often unheard and unseen. Women for Refugee Women was set up in part as a response to the media, because the stories of women and children were absent...The aim from the start was about raising the voices and telling the stories ” (Stakeholder)**

**“ I think it’s about providing information that’s factual, balanced and accurate, stories that nuance the debate. I think people are clever enough to get it if they have the right information. There is a lot of misinformation ” (Stakeholder)**

## **1.2 Research aims and objectives**

In this context we set out to better understand how migrant voices and experiences are framed in Britain’s public debate, against the backdrop of a complex relationship between the media, political debate and public attitudes. We have done this by systematically analysing migration-related stories in the British print media in the context of the 2015 General Election, when it was widely anticipated that migration would be a salient issue.

The research has the following key objectives:-

- 1. To examine the extent to which migrant voices are represented in the media in the run-up to the 2015 General Election**
- 2. To reveal the ways in which the experiences of migrants are framed and represented within the British printed press**
- 3. To better understand the influence of migrants and their messages and frames on the immigration debate**
- 4. To gain an insight into the factors which have acted as opportunities and barriers to migrant-led civil society organisations working in this area.**

We focused on the representation of migrant voices and experiences in the British print media (newspapers) rather than in broadcast (TV and radio), social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) or online news content. Despite their decreasing sales, newspapers remain important avenues for stories to reach multiple readers and they carry headlines which are seen by large numbers of people regardless of purchase and readership habits: in the words of Bleich et al. ‘more readers glance at headlines than read full articles in any newspaper’ (2015: 17). Newspapers are also an important source of information for review and discussion in broadcast media, often setting the focus and tone for associated stories and content. For many organisations working with migrants, newspapers are particularly important because they are viewed as a concrete and tangible output, allow for editorial control over content and have a longer lifespan than social media, particularly when their content can also be shared online. Whilst we recognise the growing importance of social media and online sources of information, particularly among migrants for whom international news and perspectives are important, our analysis of how newspapers report on migration provides a useful mechanism for understanding the way that these issues are understood and framed in a particular place over a specific period of time.



**“ If you are having a discussion on migrants without having any migrants around, it is very easy to hate migrants. But, if you have the people that you’re talking about in the room, the discussion changes ... We believe that all that human interaction and human stories matter. I guess that is the kind of change that we’re talking about. More informed discussions and debate, more nuanced, a change for people to have this direct understanding of another human being ” (Stakeholder)**

### 1.3 Do migrant voices matter?

The media not only provides information but also represents events, issues and people in particular ways, influencing people’s awareness of what is important and perceptions of who belongs in communities (Bleich et al 2015). News media editors and writers make choices about what stories to select, what contextual information to include and which part of the story to emphasise. They also select the sources that they use to illustrate or explain the story. In so doing the news media possesses the power to let people speak or to silence them, to give groups a voice or to leave them voiceless (Thornbjornsrud and Figenschou 2014). The presence or absence of migrants and other minority or excluded groups in the printed press has implications for the scope and content of British political and public debate on migration and, in turn, impacts on social relationships within and between communities across the country and on the lives of migrants themselves.

Firstly, **the lack of migrant voices as sources in the media can deprive the audience of a complex or nuanced understanding of migration issues** (Bennett et al 2013; Gemi et al 2013; Polson and Kahle 2010; Thornbjornsrud and Figenschou 2014). For example, if the debate is restricted to discussions about borders and numbers, because it is dominated by policymakers and enforcement officials, it will ignore the human consequences of focusing on these policy issues (Buchanan et al 2004).

Secondly, **the exclusion or absence of migrant voices in the media can have negative consequences for migrant integration**. When migrants are not visible to local government, community organisations and the wider public, they are more likely to be marginalised in

local civic and political affairs. There is also some evidence that the absence of migrant voices and perspectives contributes to negative public opinion, arousing feelings of prejudice that might otherwise have remained dormant or been challenged (Buchanan et al 2004, Greenslade 2005, Migrant Voice 2014, Nelson 2014b). Audiences exposed only to this kind of coverage can readily view migrants as villains and themselves as victims (Gemi et al 2013). Even if positive reporting does occur, it can be easily interpreted as the ‘exception to the rule’, selecting individuals whose creativity and achievements can be framed within the dominant culture (Gemi et al 2013, Triandafyllidou 2013).

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, **negative media coverage of migration and migrants can have an impact on personal well-being and security**. This, in turn, can undermine the extent to which migrants feel that they belong in British society, even when they have been living in the UK for a long time. Migrants are aware of the way they are represented in the media (Khan 2012, Migrant Voice 2014b). Many of those who participated in research by Migrant Voice (2014b) expressed a deep sense of anxiety and unease, as well as sadness, about the direction of the political debate on migration, focusing on what they perceived as a persistent, and often deliberative, misrepresentation of migration and migrants in the British media. Nearly half (46%) said that media and political debates had an impact on their sense of belonging and more than two thirds that they had been personally affected by both the overall tone of the migration debate and by inaccurate media reporting. Others reported an increase in racism and discrimination. Many of those who participated in our research shared these concerns and expressed anxiety about the longer term implications for their children.

### 1.4 Structure of the report

The report begins in **Section 2** with an overview of our overall approach including the methods that were used to gather the information and carry out our analysis. We also set out the frames that we use to categorise media coverage of migration issues, in particular the distinction between ‘victim’ and threat or ‘villain’ frames, which are useful for positioning and comparing a broad range of perspectives.

**Section 3** of the report provides an overview of our findings in relation to the coverage of migration in the British print press in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election and the different ways in which migration issues were framed. This includes both the quantity of stories relating to migration and the themes that were dominant in the pre-election period.

In **Section 4** we turn to the experiences of migrants were framed in migration stories in the British print press exploring both the extent, and ways in which, migrant voices could be heard.

We conclude in **Section 5** with our reflections on whether it is possible for the British print press to move towards an alternative framing paradigm in which migrants and migration are viewed as a ‘normal’ rather than ‘exceptional’ part of contemporary British life.

**“ The question about how I feel about my feeling when I see the coverage of newspaper, Metro, Sun, any of them, I feel very frustrated. You feel alone, you are not part of this society, you see yourself as a criminal judging by the media. Sometimes I’m scared, honestly, when I see, you see around you is full of people, in the train, in the bus. There [was] a time that I used to get up from the train. I’ve been scared of other people even I know they don’t know me, whether I’m an asylum seeker or I was born here unless I start talking ”**  
**(Migrant, London)**

**“ My daughter is 5 years old and a boy in her school told her that she was not British ... You feel when you read the first page [of the newspaper], you feel like you are being sent out ... What is going to be the future of these kids who are born here then brought up then now with that mentality of other being pushed? ”** **(Migrant, London)**

## 2. Our Approach

This research aims not only to examine the content of the media debate on migration, but also to better understand who influences the contours of the debate, how and with what implications, with a particular focus on migrant voices. To achieve this, we adopted three different methods, each of which reveals distinct dimensions of the issue.

1. **A frame analysis of the print media**
2. **Interviews with key stakeholders**
3. **Focus groups with migrants**

In this section we briefly outline each of these methods in turn before presenting our findings.

### 2.1 Frame analysis of the print media

The term 'frame' refers to the ways that speakers and writers construct arguments about certain topics. By framing, they link the topic to other events and issues and make value-judgements about its implications and impact on society (Goffman 1986, Snow et al 1986). In political debate, frames are a tool for giving meaning to issues and topics. As a result, they are vital for building arguments.

Frame analysis was first defined by Erving Goffman in his seminal work on meanings in communication and interaction (1986 [1974]). Goffman argued that in order to create the desired meaning to a speech or an action, people would shape them within a 'framework' or 'schemata of interpretation' responsible for 'rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful [...] allow[ing] its user to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms' (1986: 21). Our analysis adopted a definition of frames as composed of the following four aspects: (1) a definition of an issue or problem; (2) assignment of a cause or responsibility to it; (3) passing a moral judgement on its implications, and (4) reaching a possible solution. This aligns with the common definition from a wide body of previous research (Entman 1993).

The material that we analysed was composed of articles in seven British newspapers in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election (1st January – 7th May 2015). Our sources were The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, The Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph, The Guardian and The Observer, Independent and Independent on Sunday, The Mirror and The Sunday Mirror, The Sun, and The Times and The Sunday Times. The material was gathered from the LexisNexis database.

We searched for the all major mentions in the UK of the terms 'immigration' OR 'immigrant', bringing up articles which include the search term in the headline, lead paragraph or index. This broad search was intended to find articles that have migration as their primary topic, even when a different vocabulary is used to the search terms, such as referring to 'foreigners' or 'migrants'. The data was then also cleaned for consistency prior to analysis. All repetitions of the same article were removed from the sample as were articles from local and regional editions and those which only mentioned migration in passing and did not address it as an issue in any detail. The end result was a corpus of 648 articles on migration in the period from 1st January to 7th May 2015. This formed the basis of a frame analysis, details of which can be found below.

Studies have defined a myriad of migration frames, but common across them is a distinction between **victim frames**, presenting migrants as victims of inequality and/or discrimination and in need of support to overcome it, **benefit frames**, highlighting the contribution (real or potential) of migrants to the host society, and **threat or villain frames**, presenting **migrants and migration** as a challenge to people's jobs and /or security. An in-depth review of the press in France and the United States by Benson (2013) identified ten migration frames, grouping them as victim frames (a global economy frame, a humanitarian frame and a racism/xenophobia frame), hero frames (a cultural diversity frame, an integration frame and a good worker frame), and finally threat frames (a jobs frame, a public order frame, a fiscal frame and a national cohesion frame).

Our study adopted a similar distinction between victim and threat or villain frames as a useful guide for positioning and comparing a broad range of perspectives. The full list of frames and their definitions can be seen in Figure 1. Victim frames are united here in their portrayal of migrants as in need, or deserving, of support or other changes to the nature of the environment in Britain in order to improve their situation. They make a call for the state and/or the host society to provide support and make changes to accommodate them. Villain frames, in contrast, share the characteristic

of viewing migration and migrants as something to be stopped or reduced in order to protect life in Britain from any negative impact. They suggest that Britain should not change in the face of incoming migration. Hero frames present migrants as having made an important contribution to Britain, whether to the economy or to the

cultural identity of the country. Finally, the political contention frame concentrates on the competition between political parties rather than on the dynamics of migration or the lives of migrants.

We examined the presence or absence of migrant voices in the articles by searching for quotations from people who are from migrant backgrounds. Quotations are important because they highlight whether an individual has exerted an influence on the way in which the story has been shaped by the journalist. Journalists can use quotes in different ways, such as to lend legitimacy or authenticity to their own accounts, to lend an air of credibility to what has been written or to enable the writer to maintain a 'posture of objectivity or neutrality' by presenting polemical positions through the mouths of outside sources (Benson and Wood 2015: 804-5).

**Figure 1. Frame types found in the British print media, 1st January-7th May 2015**

Frame title		Description
Victim frames	Humanitarian frame	Immigrants are people in disadvantaged situations (victims) and should be supported to improve their welfare and have their rights guaranteed
	Integration frame	Immigration poses challenges but is a reality that cannot be avoided. Migrants integrate over time but there should be changes in the host country to accommodate them.
Villain frames	Burden frame	Immigration measures to support arrivals are necessary but costly to state and local authorities so cannot go on indefinitely. Should lower immigration to protect the local state.
	Competition frame	Immigrants compete for already scarce jobs and funds, increasing poverty, unemployment and insecurity, putting natives at risk.
	Control frame	Immigration is too high and out of control. Border and integration policies are ineffective, requiring stronger borders and reduced migratory flows. Governments should have control over migration levels and integration dynamics.
	Public order frame	Immigrants are dangerous, criminal and/or violent and this poses a threat to the public order and safety of native people.
Hero frames	Economic benefit frame	Immigration brings many benefits to the host society and economy and these should be recognised.
	Cultural benefit frame	Particular immigrants have contributed strongly to our country and are a positive representation of our society.
Political contention frame		Immigration is a contentious and divisive phenomenon, which divides people. It should be debated and addressed to reflect people's concerns.

## 2.2 Interviews with stakeholders

In addition to the frame analysis we undertook stakeholder interviews with representatives from eleven organisations working to engage migrant experiences and voices in the migration debate including Migrant Voice, Migrant Rights Network, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), CitizensUK, Women for Refugee Women, Migration Observatory (Oxford University), British Future and Migrant Forum.

## 2.3 Focus groups with migrants

We held focus groups discussions with 60 migrants from a range of different backgrounds and ethnicities and with different trajectories and statuses to explore their perceptions of, and engagement with, the migration debate in the period leading up to the 2015 General Election. The focus groups were organised by Migrant Voice in Glasgow, Birmingham and London. Qualitative material from the stakeholder interviews and focus groups has been used in the report to contextualise and interpret the results of the frame analysis.

## 3. Migration in the media: issues and frames

### 3.1 Background

Coverage of migration in the British media has previously been the focus of considerable research, much of which emphasises a biased, dehumanising and largely negative representation of migrants in the printed press.

In this literature, the terminology used to describe migration and migrants has been found to build on negative stereotypes (Buchanan et al 2004, Nelson 2014) to present migration as a 'problem' to be solved (Balch and Balabanova 2014, Khan 2012), or as a risk or danger to society (Rasinger 2010). Many studies have found that migrants have been presented as a burden on the welfare state or associated with crime (Buchanan et al 2004, Innes 2010, Khan 2012, Lawlor 2015, Rasinger 2010, Semotam 2011, Vicol and Allen 2014). In particular, an analysis of national daily and Sunday newspapers found that the word 'immigrant' was most commonly used by journalists in association with the term 'illegal' whilst the term 'asylum seekers' was most commonly deployed in association with 'failed' and 'destitute' (Allen and Blinder 2013). Elsewhere, frames linking migration to criminality and social unrest have been found to be particularly effective for mobilising voter support for the radical right (Rydgren 2008).

Although some research has identified the existence of more sympathetic media representations of migrants, these stories frequently resort to stereotypes, both positive and negative, often presenting refugees in particular as nameless, 'passive victims' (Khan 2012). Research has highlighted the failure of both print and broadcast journalists across Europe to accurately differentiate between categories of migrants, especially between those arriving for employment and those seeking refuge (Buchanan et al 2004, Gemi et al 2013). Moreover Buchanan et al (2004) have found that both the right-leaning and left-leaning British press use images which tend to emphasise risk, fear and danger, such as men climbing fences, approaching the Channel Tunnel or fighting with police, rather than more everyday scenes such as families in work or domestic settings.



### 3.2 Coverage and framing of migration

Our analysis builds on these previous findings by highlighting the newspapers which were most likely to write stories about migration and the differences between newspapers (broadsheet vs. tabloid, right and left leaning) in the number of migration stories and the ways in which these stories were presented.

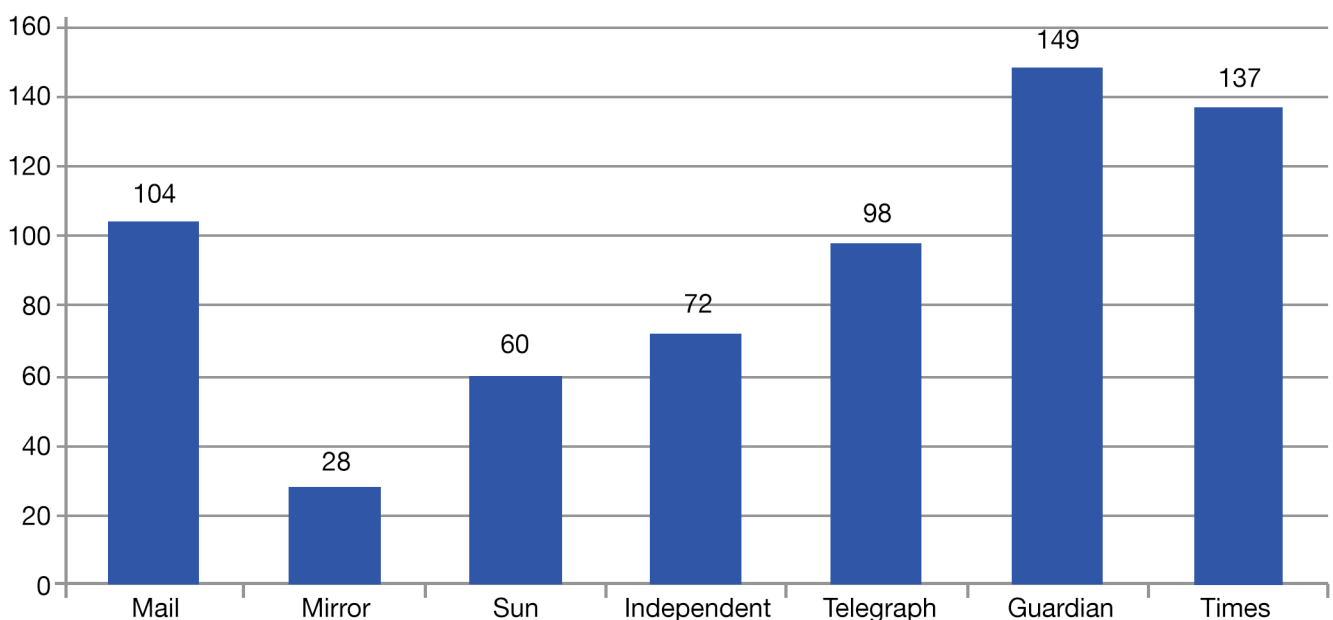
We found that **migration cannot be easily categorised as a right-wing or left-wing issue**, or one of particular interest only to tabloid or broadsheet readers. The findings indicate that stories about migration are of interest to all newspapers and not only, or even predominantly, those commonly perceived as being ‘anti-immigration’ in approach or perspective. As noted in the previous chapter, there was a total of 648 migration stories over the period 1st January-7th May in the seven newspapers that were the focus of our analysis. The newspaper which published the most articles was The Guardian (149 articles), followed by The Times (137), The Daily Mail (104) and The Daily Telegraph (98) (Figure 2). On March 24th The Guardian even dedicated a special edition of its

pull-out section ‘journal’ as well as all of its opinion pages to migration. The newspaper least likely to publish stories which focus on migration was The Mirror (28 articles).

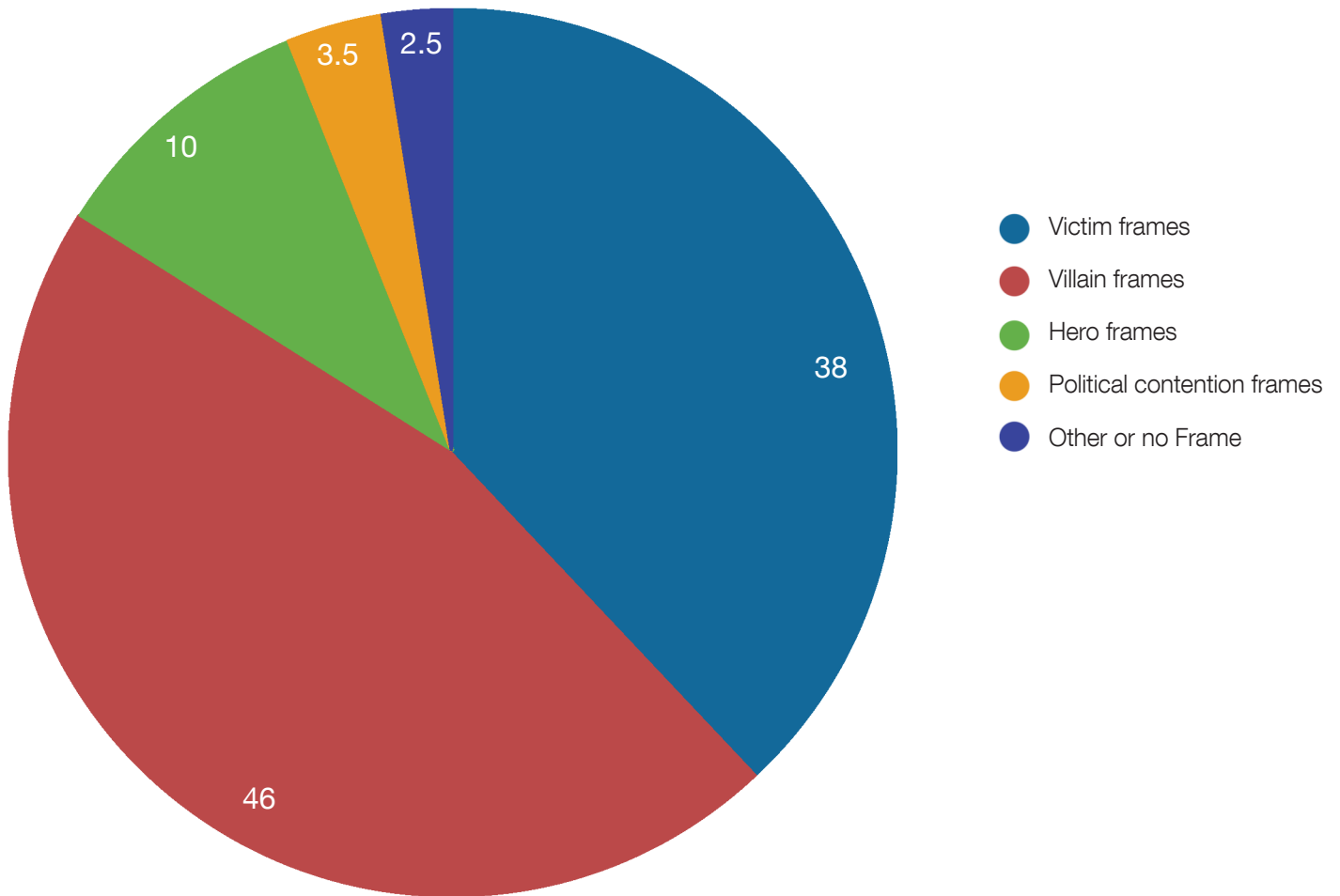
There was also a wide range of issues addressed, including the Mediterranean migration crisis, EU free movement, the economy, employment, housing, healthcare, illegality, migrant detention, deportation, migrant voting intentions and border security among others. This range is not necessarily surprising, as migration intersects with a range of concerns and policy areas. Within these, the issues that emerged as particularly important during the pre-election period were:

- **The number of migrants entering the UK (13% of all the articles analysed)**
- **The views of the UKIP leader Nigel Farage and his party’s potential impact on the election outcome (15%)**

**Figure 2 Number of articles on migration in the British Press, 1st January - 7th May 2015**



**Figure 3. Frames in UK press articles on migration, 1st January - 7th May 2015 (%)**



As the election drew closer the Mediterranean migration crisis also came to occupy a highly visible place in the print media, **accounting for 12% of the articles published in the final two months of the campaign period.**

And yet, despite this wide range of issues, there was considerably less variation in the way that migration and migrants were framed in the British print media. **Nearly half (46%) of all the articles framed migration as a threat and migrants as actual or potential 'villains'. A further 38% of the articles were rooted in the victim frame** (Figure 3). The next most frequently employed frame presented migration as a benefit, principally to the economy, with 10% of articles presented in this way, whilst only a small proportion presented migration purely as a source of contention and controversy.

This finding may surprise some who had considered the debate to be too overtly-focused on the economic costs and benefits of migration. Over recent years the Labour

party in particular has been accused of presenting migration as an economic opportunity at the expense of other issues (e.g. Goodwin 2012). Yet we found that arguments emphasising the economic benefit of migration were more likely to appear in the broadsheets on the centre-right (The Times and The Telegraph). They referred to the importance of international students and highly-skilled 'talent' but were largely impersonal and rarely referenced a migrant perspective.

In general, then, it can be seen that a striking majority of the print media's portrayal of migration during the 2015 General Election presented migrants as either in need of support and help or as having a negative impact on the UK that should be mitigated. We explore these representations further below by focusing in on the three important aspects of the debate identified above: the concern about the numbers of migrants entering the UK, the views of Nigel Farage and UKIP, and the Mediterranean migration crisis.

### 3.3 The numbers game: a control frame

Our analysis found that **reports and comments from politicians often emphasised the number of migrants coming to the UK with little context or detail beyond the statistics.** Mostly, these were articles in which representatives from the main political parties claimed that there were too many migrants arriving in the UK and that the number should be reduced. This reflected a perception, recorded in public opinion surveys over recent years, that there are too many migrants in the UK, even though many over-estimate the size of the immigrant population. **The numbers game was the focus of 13% of the articles that we analysed.**

Both the Conservative and Labour parties made efforts to assuage these concerns by declaring that they would be able to control, and indeed reduce, migration. In 2015, the Conservatives repackaged their 2010 pledge to drastically reduce immigration as an ‘ambition’ whilst the Labour Party, facing accusations of having caused uncontrolled mass immigration to the UK during its previous time in government, made ‘Controls on migration’ one of its five pledges (and a design for a mug). Accordingly, the articles on numbers and levels of immigration were almost exclusively presented through a control frame criticising past leaders (particularly from the Labour Party) and calling for candidates to ‘get a grip’ on the situation and end ‘mass immigration’.

The numbers game was a vivid example of the use of a control frame: the scale of migration to the UK was presented as a justification for greater controls and

restrictions on the phenomenon, although the implications of migration for society or the economy was addressed in considerably less detail.

#### **Britain and Europe must slam the brakes on mass immigration**

**The Sunday Times, 8th March 2015**

Tony Blair’s decision to throw open the doors early to Poland and the other eastern European accession countries 11 years ago brought some of the best and brightest to our shores. But the latest wave is less impressive: waitresses who cannot read the menu and drivers doing the minimum hours to get tax credits. Britain is now a country looking for the emergency brake.

#### **‘GET GRIP’ PLEA OVER MIGRANTS**

**The Sun, 20th March 2015**

MINISTERS were last night urged to “get a grip” on immigration - after forecasts of a fresh explosion ... Migration Watch founder Lord Green said: “When will the political class sit up and take notice of overwhelming public opposition to mass immigration?”

Despite occasional comments stating that migrants themselves often are not in favour of high levels of immigration, the debate on numbers made no direct references to migrant views. This view was reflected in the comments made by migrants who participated in our research:

**“ The government has been obsessed with numbers and the political debate has taken the media to a place where they have also become obsessed with numbers. But focusing on numbers can’t help them to deal with the grey areas, the nuances, the complexities of migration ” (Stakeholder)**

### 3.4 Party leaders, not policy proposals

**Coverage of migration in the months running up to the 2015 General Election was also strongly influenced by the personalities of party leaders and key figures, often at the expense of the content of policy proposals.** The televised debates between leaders were reviewed in the British press and produced a seemingly endless stream of soundbites from party leaders. However, above all there was a focus on Nigel Farage, the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP).

In the years preceding the 2015 election, UKIP had experienced a dramatic rise in influence in British politics and public debate. For the elections to the European Parliament in 2014, the party had received the highest amount of votes of all parties, and a key aspect of their appeal was a strong anti-immigration position, particularly in relation to migration from the European Union, often voiced in colourful and controversial terms. **No fewer than 15% of the articles that were analysed were about, or directly referenced Farage, his views and his party's potential impact on the election outcome.** This is greater than most of the other single migration issues.

In the run up to the 2015 General Election an apparently confused immigration policy and contradictory messages from UKIP candidates were widely reported and mocked, whilst provocative comments, most notably that migrants

should not have access to treatment for HIV, sparked debate and sometimes outrage among journalists and migrant activists.

#### **Cheer (and loathing) on the campaign trail with Nasty Nigel and the Little Englanders**

**Daily Mirror, April 29th 2015**

On a clear day you can see France from Ramsgate, but Nigel Farage doesn't want people to look. You might see bloody foreigners! He believes he is riding to Westminster on a wave of anti-immigrant anger ... A place that has always bravely looked to the sea and foreign parts, reduced to a xenophobic corner of Kent, moated by the English Channel.

Beyond this, much of the interest in UKIP focused not on their policies, but on their potential impact on the election result. Articles stated in general terms that both the Conservatives and Labour should address 'concerns' about migration, as this would 'neutralise the UKIP threat' and because voters could 'turn to UKIP'. As a result, UKIP and its leader had an important impact on the political debate on migration even though the party was ultimately only able to secure a single seat in the 2015 General Election.

**“ I don't recall any other issues pushing through except maybe the Katie Hopkins article and some coverage of what Farage said about HIV which was basically a line that couldn't be crossed, people didn't find it acceptable because it had racial undertones. But these issues were spikes, they surfaced and died ” (Stakeholder)**

**“ The main stories were when they did the debates. Then, the media was finding out the racist comment by UKIP members somewhere ” (Stakeholder)**

“ When UKIP presented a big problem and the other parties start panicking and start to react irrationally, not in a reasonable manner, the debate changed a lot ” (Stakeholder)

“ I think the biggest success of UKIP is that they shaped the whole debate so it looked like that everyone is rising to the right wing side of politics... it was very disappointing to see people moving into the xenophobic/racist sort of discourse ” (Migrant, London)

### Tories slash inheritance tax on homes

The Sunday Times, 12th April 2015

The prime minister said the Tory manifesto would also feature a pledge to ban European Union migrants from claiming in-work benefits in the UK until they have been working for four years - a move designed to neutralise the threat from UKIP

### Too few voters understand immigrants' role in UK recovery

The Observer, 22nd March 2015

Positive views on immigration rise with financial literacy, but uninformed majority could still turn to UKIP, study finds.

### COME HOME TO THE TORIES, CAMERON TELLS UKIP VOTERS

Daily Mail, 7th April 2015

In a direct appeal to voters who have shifted allegiance to Nigel Farage's party, the Prime Minister vowed to do more' to respond to concerns about immigration.

### 3.5 The Mediterranean migration crisis: a tale of two frames

**The migration crisis in the Mediterranean came to dominate media coverage of migration issues during the latter stages of the General Election campaign.** Throughout 2015, the plight of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean grabbed the headlines, especially in April 2015 when an estimated 700 people drowned when an overcrowded fishing vessel travelling from North Africa capsized off the coast of Libya. Political leaders from across Europe called out for action, with the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi stating that 'we must stop this carnage' and the European Council holding urgent talks 'to prevent further loss of life at sea and to tackle the root causes of the human emergency that we face' (European Council 2015).

In the final two months before the General Election **12% of the articles which focused on migration were concerned with Europe's migration crisis.** An examination of these articles highlights how the British press can be quite varied in its representation of migrant issues, presenting the same events through quite distinct frames according to the publication. Around one fifth (18.5%) of the articles adopted a control frame, often suggesting that millions of people would be arriving imminently in Europe if further action was not taken. A minority (13%) also presented the migration crisis through villain frames



as a burden on British taxpayers or a threat to public order and security. An article by The Sun columnist Katie Hopkins went further, shocking commentators by describing migrants as ‘cockroaches.’ Comments made by Nigel Farage describing migrants as ‘a direct threat to our civilization’ also received significant coverage.

## **FARAGE: BOAT PEOPLE POSE TERROR THREAT TO EU**

**Daily Mail, April 29th 2015**

NIGEL Farage will say today that allowing refugees into Europe could lead to half a million Islamic extremists coming to our countries and posing ‘a direct threat to our civilisation’ ... He will warn that if the EU agrees to give refuge to migrants from North Africa, it could lead to millions being given passports that allow them to move to Britain.

## **Rescue boats? I'd use gunships to stop migrants**

**The Sun, 16th April 2015**

NO, I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad ... What we need are gunships sending these boats back to their own country.

Yet this does not tell the whole story. **The findings of our research indicate that over two-thirds (68.5%) of the articles on the migration crisis adopted a humanitarian frame.** These articles used emotive language to frame their calls for rescue operations and efforts to improve living conditions in countries of origin to help the desperate people who were willing to risk their lives at sea. The articles were almost entirely published in the left-wing broadsheets, The Guardian and The Independent.

## **The Guardian view on the Mediterranean migrants: every life is a precious life**

**The Guardian, 21st April 2015**

A proud father who is fleeing persecution, a mother who wants to give her family a chance - every migrant who risks their lives in the Mediterranean has a story that any European would recognise.

## **Refugees don't need our tears. They need us to stop making them refugees**

**The Guardian, 20th April 2015**

Far too often, even the positive takes on migration are driven by numbers and finance, by “What can they do for us?” This is about two things: compassion and responsibility.

It is worth noting, however that only a small proportion of those participating in the focus groups and stakeholder interviews identified the Mediterranean migration crisis as a dominant theme in the British press in the period leading up to the 2015 General Election. Most perceived that the migration crisis in Europe had only come to dominate the British media following publication of Aylan Kurdi's body on a Turkish beach.

### **3.6 Managing the media debate on migration**

Although stories around the number of migrants arriving in the UK, the Mediterranean migration crisis and UKIP were clearly important in the context of the months leading up to the 2015 General Election, many of those who participated in the research were strongly of the view that **migration was less present as an issue for the British press than had been anticipated and feared.** This was attributed, in significant part, to the vulnerability of the main political parties on the issue and to the rise in UKIP support during the previous year. Migration was not perceived to be a vote winner for the Conservatives because of the failure to

meet their own net migration target, whilst Labour was aware of the threat that their voters could defect to UKIP if they were unable to address concerns about the perceived impacts of migration on jobs, housing and schools that were raised on the doorstep.

As a result, it was considered that the main political parties did not focus on migration as a central issue to the same extent that might have been expected. Although migration was frequently discussed in the press, our study found that politicians often presented little more than short sound-bites and slogans which mentioned the issue without going into detail. In doing so, they reduced the number of opportunities available to the press to focus in on migration or to draw dividing lines between the parties and their stance on it.

The relationship between politicians and the media is a complex one that is affected by a number of different factors. This is especially true in the context of a General Election, especially in the context of a General Election when the political allegiances of different newspapers means that they may choose to protect parties on some issues on which they may be vulnerable and which might ultimately have the potential to be vote losers rather than vote winners.

Nonetheless we found that **there are important opportunities for local and national political leaders to shape the tone of the public and media debate on migration – should they choose to do so.** If politicians talk about migration less, or in different ways, as they did during the run-up to the 2015 General Election then this has implications for the extent and ways in which migration is discussed in the printed press.

“**The coverage of migration in the pre-election period demonstrates how easy it is to manage the media. You only have to watch the way in which the Conservative party put the brakes on talking about immigration every three to four months when the immigration statistics are published. One day there are immigration stories coming from government, the next day they stop**” (Stakeholder)

“**There was less focus on migration in the run-up to the election than there is now. During the election they [politicians] were staying away from it, they were saying ‘let’s not get that dirty’. To be honest it was a relief. They don’t really know how to handle it. And we were glad**” (Stakeholder)

“**There was a concerted effort by the main political parties to avoid talking about migration. They lacked any vision of how to talk about migration...so they didn’t**” (Stakeholder)

“**If no-one is saying anything [about migration] then what can you do, what can you say?**” (Stakeholder)

## 4. Migrant voices in the media: victims and villains

The previous section provided an overview of the coverage and framing of migration issues in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election. In this section we focus on the ways that the experiences and voices of migrants in particular were framed in the British print press. Overall, despite the wide variety of issues discussed in relation to migration, there was a narrow range of ways of presenting migrant experiences, with leftwing newspapers including them more frequently than rightwing ones.

Yet, although the presence of migrants in the print media was generally quite small, it is also true that there certainly was a demand from the media for migrant voices. Indeed, it is important to note that **migrant voices were often included in public debate specifically when highlighting and speaking out against situations of injustice, suffering or unfairness through emotional personal stories**. As will be shown here, this personalised victimhood has both advantages and disadvantages.

### 4.1 Who gets to speak?

Many of those who participated in our research expressed concern about who gets to speak about migration, or on behalf of migrants, in the media.

In 2004, an in-depth report published Article 19 found that migrants were rarely provided with an opportunity to explain for themselves the reasons why they had left their countries or origin and neither were they asked to reflect on their new situation in the UK (Buchanan et al 2004).

The authors found that refugees were quoted as a principal source in only 8% of news items (print and broadcast) about refugee or asylum issues that included a named source. Refugees were only cited as secondary sources an additional 20 times.

A decade later, research conducted by Migrant Voice (2014a) found that the voices and experiences of migrants were quoted in only 12% of 557 news items sampled between January and April 2014. Many of these articles reflected explicitly negative attitudes toward not only migration processes and policies but also migrants themselves. A study of coverage of irregular migration in the US, French and Norwegian media similarly found that the subject of the coverage - irregular migrants - made up less than 10% of the quoted sources (Thornbjørnsrud and Figenschou 2014).

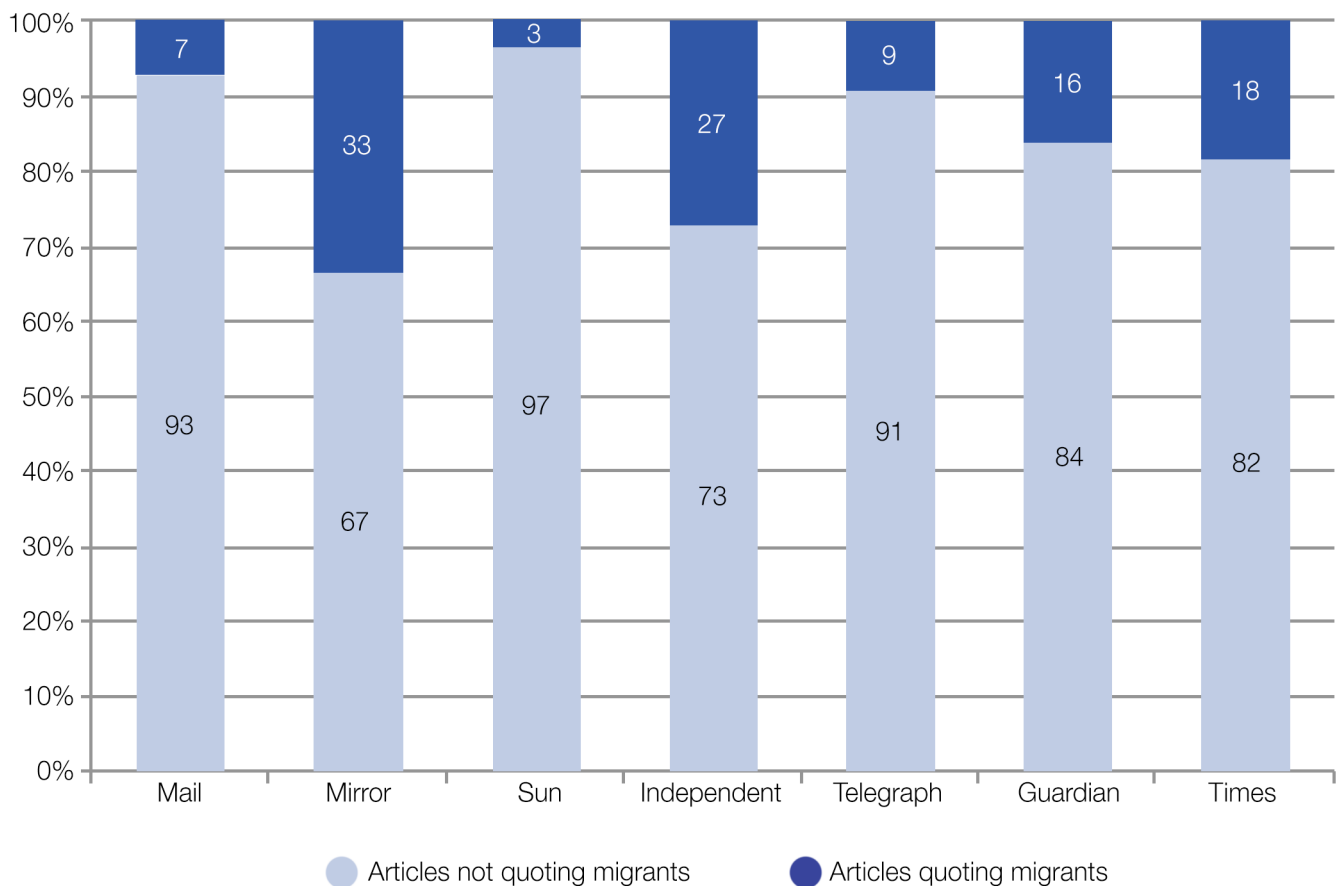
**“ I am a migrant domestic worker. It’s very hard. It’s like the media is very big and the migrant is too small in terms of the discussion, the coverage. Our voice is not so strong... ”**  
(Migrant, London)

**“ [Who speaks?] The ones that hold positions of authority, such as migrant background politicians, or migrant presenters or newspaper columnists. Apart from those individuals, there isn’t much of a dialogue or discussion within other sections of the community, those cannot reach out for whatever reason, which aren’t those in a position of authority ”**  
(Migrant, Glasgow)

By contrast, the voices of elites (the officials, politicians, professionals, and police officers) often dominate and direct public discourses (Jacomella 2010), with the implication that the media can rely heavily on politicians, official figures, and the police as sources (Bennett et al 2013, Rasinger 2010, van Dijk 2005, Jacomella 2010, Gemi 2013, Migrant Voice 2014, Nelson 2014a). Buchanan et al (2004) found that of the print articles which cited a source (182 out of 214 sampled), 39% cited a politician, or a central / local government official. Other key contributors were professionals (teachers, doctors and lawyers) (6% of print articles), and the police (3% of print articles). In other words, the media was found to be six times more likely to quote a politician, official, professional or police officer than a migrant.

**These concerns are reflected in our research, which found that just 15% of the newspaper articles which were published on the topic of migration in the run-up to the 2015 General Election included a migrant voice or perspective.** This is slightly higher than found in previous studies. Migrant voices were referenced in articles from all of the newspapers in our analysis, although the left-wing broadsheets (Independent, Guardian) had the most stories quoting migrants and the right-wing tabloids (Daily Mail, Sun) had the least. When this is analysed in relation to the overall number of migration stories that were printed by each newspaper, the Independent and the Daily Mirror came out as considerably more likely to provide a quotation from a migrant. From our analysis, **27% of the articles from the Independent referenced a migrant perspective, rising to 33% in the case of the Daily Mirror. By contrast, 97% of the articles from The Sun did not provide a migrant perspective** (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Presence of migrant voices in British newspapers**



## 4.2 Giving voice to the migrant as 'victim'

The findings presented above highlight how certain parts of the press are more likely to directly quote a migrant's perspective in their reporting, specifically the left wing press. However, the presence of a migrant voice is a crude statistic that tells us little about the role of migrant voices in and the way that the press represents them. We can have a clearer view of what this means by looking at the frames twithin which these voices are represented .

The findings of our research indicate that not only were direct references from migrants relatively rare in press reports during the election campaign, but that they were also presented in a narrow range of ways. **Migrant voices are most often presented in humanitarian and integration frames where they can be described as victims;** people who need our support as they give a voice to suffering and disadvantage or epitomise positive integration, co-existence and Britishness. A large proportion of the quotations from migrants in frames of this type were in articles expressing a humanitarian frame, followed by integration frames (as can be seen in Figure 5).

In other words, migrant voices are more likely to be included in stories which tend towards more positive,

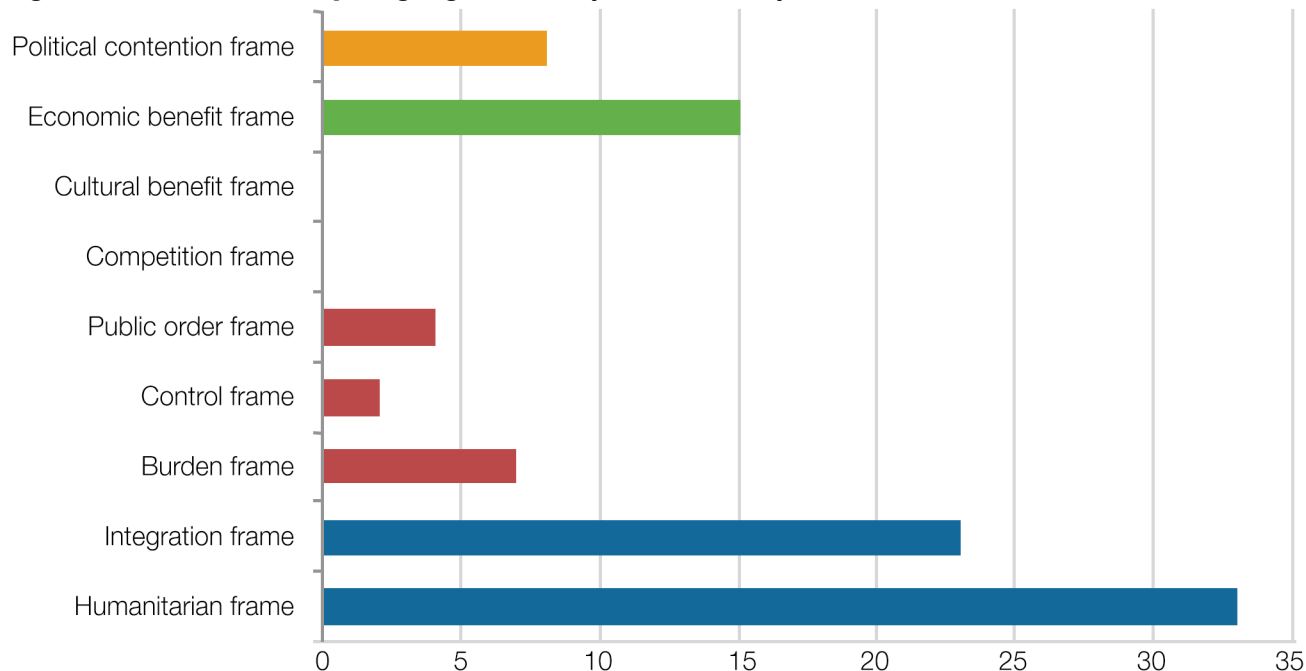
In the run up to the 2015 General Election 2015 election sympathetic or humanising portrayals of migration. campaign in particular, migrants often occupied the role of a victim to be helped or sympathised with. Migrant voices almost never offered a distinct perspective to the rest of the article. Rather their voices and experiences are perhaps best understood as 'vignettes', adding a slight personal dimension to the story being covered, in line with the editorial tone of the publication. This suggests that nigrant voices and experiences thus need to be pitched in certain ways according to the newsletter that they are to be included in.

### Andrea Gada's parents write to PM after funeral visa plea is rejected

**The Guardian, 20 January 2015**

The grieving parents of a five-year-old girl whose Zimbabwean grandparents have been refused a temporary visa to attend her funeral have appealed to the prime minister ... [Her mother] said: "I haven't been able to touch anything. I can't really begin to grieve properly because of all these problems with the Home Office. ... I feel very, very alone. There is a gap which no one else can fill for me but my mum and dad. I need them to be there. We are not asking for much."

**Figure 5. Number of articles quoting migrant voices (% of each frame)**



Migrant voices which were referenced in reports also had an important role to play as a tool for emotional storytelling. By focusing on a person's experiences, direct references to migrants' experiences can be engaging for the reader and allow the writer to approach complex or controversial issues in a humane way. As a result, newspapers that are often associated with anti-immigrant views may not necessarily be adverse to publishing emotional personal stories which inspire compassion or respect for immigrants who are victims of injustices and deserve help to have a better life (a humanitarian frame).

On 13th April 2015 the Daily Mail did just that, writing about how an Afghan interpreter, known as Chris, 'who risked his life on the front line with British troops' had been 'abandoned' by the UK government. The interpreter was repeatedly denied entry to the UK, despite being threatened and eventually shot in Afghanistan due to his past involvement with the British. The quotes from the interpreter are rich with emotion and patriotism.

The article then built on these emotional comments to argue that the UK should allow deserving migrants such as Chris to come, whilst controlling against others. 'Deserving', in this particular article, implied people who had an historical connection to Britain, having served the British army in the past. This highlights how a personal story can allow for nuance and sympathy in the writer's stance on a controversial topic and can bring a story to life.

A further example of the important role that migrant voices can play is shown by the campaign to end the indefinite detention of migrants and asylum seekers. 5% of all migration stories in our sample were related to detention with 14 articles on this topic in two months immediately preceding the election. Nearly half of these articles contained direct quotes from migrants.

## ABANDONED

**Daily Mail, 13th April 2015**

"I worked outside military bases with UK forces where I took huge personal risk on a daily basis - I served with distinction, placing myself in mortal danger to save my British colleagues. ... but the Government has totally forgotten its allies who helped them during the worst of times here. I have seen British soldiers die in front me and I have collected soldiers' remains - now I think I am being abandoned ... It is disgusting the way we are being treated. We are not even being treated like human beings, my colleagues have to live in the shadows with their families looking over their shoulders constantly in fear of death."

## Yarl's Wood play puts audience in detention

**The Guardian, 7th March 2015**

Mavis Smith - not her real name - who came to Britain nine years ago from her home in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. "It has been very tough. Not easy at all. At times you just pray and pray," she said. "I feel like crying when I think about it."



## **Detainees' hunger strike spreads to second centre**

**Independent, 11th March 2015**

"We are not criminals... most of us want to seek asylum by ourselves and we are being detained for half a year and over. We are locked up in rooms like animals"

## **Labour vows to ban indefinite detention of asylum and immigration applicants**

**The Guardian, 26th March 2015**

Zrinka Bralo, a Citizens UK campaign leader, expressed her delight, saying: "Indefinite detention is a stain on the character of Britain. Detaining people indefinitely in prison-like conditions without judicial oversight is unfair, unjust, ineffective and inhumane. It destroys lives and breaks up families."

**“ We can put the success down to civil society. There was a set of coordinated actions involving Citizens UK and Detention Action. Two of the top three asks made by Citizens UK were detention-related and they asked the Lib Dems and Labour to look at these issues closely. So civil society have got to take a lot of the credit for the success of that story in the media ” (Stakeholder)**

Media coverage of the campaign to end indefinite detention in the months leading up to the 2015 General Election was widely regarded by the stakeholders who participated in this research as a significant – and somewhat unexpected – success. So why did this issue, unlike others, seem to gain traction? Our interviews show there appear to be a number of interconnected reasons.

Firstly, **the coverage was the culmination of a long-running campaign** by, among others, Detention Action and Citizens UK, together with considerable efforts 'behind the scenes' by a number of organisations to coordinate their work and maximise on the opportunities made available to them and created by others.

**“ If you have asked me beforehand what are the issues to appear in the news election campaign, I'm afraid that detention would have been fairly low down on my list. Just the notion that you could make a case on detention and there is a chance that you might split the parties on this. But, they did a brilliant job... I think it showed the sheer value of good planning and building up your strategy in a step by step process which included everything including parliamentary inquiries ”**

**(Stakeholder)**

**“ A part of the reason why it worked for us is that we already were part of the process. Nine months before we submitted 12 individual testimonies that we have from detainees. We had already prepared the ground ”**

**(Stakeholder)**

Secondly, **the campaign to end indefinite detention was a policy issue which had political traction and gathered momentum over time.** On 14th January 2015, Women for Refugee Women launched a report called ‘I Am Human’ on the detention of women at Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre which revealed that women were routinely watched and searched by male staff, despite Home Office denials. The launch was attended by Stella Creasy MP, Richard Fuller MP, and over 100 refugee women and supporters. On 2nd March Channel 4 aired its undercover investigation into Yarl’s Wood which also turned into a print story. The following day the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Migration launched the findings of its Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention in the UK to which many organisations had contributed over the proceeding nine months.

Although the main political parties were struggling to deal with migration in general Labour was willing to take a position on indefinite detention. The announcement by Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper that Labour intended to introduce new time limits on immigrant detention if elected led to further media coverage of the issue.

Finally, **the campaign sought to capture the attention of audiences by telling moving personal stories about life in detention.** Much of the work needed to facilitate the telling of personal stories and to capture the voices of those with direct first-hand experiences of indefinite detention had already been undertaken and could be provided to journalists in a timely and accessible way. Preparations undertaken for the APPG Inquiry process, collecting testimonies from those who had been subjected to indefinite detention, in addition to the research by Women for Refugee Women, meant that there was already a group

of people who were prepared to talk about their stories and had been provided with the necessary support to enable them to do so.

### **Migrant detention: Souleymanyé’s story**

**The Guardian, 3rd March 2015**

Souleymanyé, 50, spent three and a half years in Dungavel and Colnbrook detention centres ... He was horrified by the continuing detention. “Before I came here, I thought the UK had the best democracy in Europe. I changed my mind after a while.” He said detention had a very negative and lasting impact on his own and fellow detainees’ mental health, and he saw people around him “collapsing mentally”

**“ The bit that was most successful was the work that we’ve done on the case studies... I think there were four sides...here is the person, this is where they come from, here is a bit of their back story and this is what they’ve done. The Independent, because they knew that we would have that, their photographer did a two pagespread where they lifted the case studies. There were lovely photographs of them. They were out in the front page ”** (Stakeholder)

## **‘Let them slash their wrists’: a guard’s care for immigrant detainees**

**The Sunday Times, 1st March 2015**

Esther Azigwe, who suffered years of sexual violence as a teenager in Ghana before fleeing to the UK, claimed that her mental health had deteriorated significantly at Yarl’s Wood. When a female guard and a colleague told her that she was about to be sent back to Ghana by force, she panicked. “[They said] we will force you and take you back to your country because we are allowed to force you in any way,” she said.

As shown in this short description, the detention campaign successfully united research and personal testimonies to have an impact through various channels, from newspapers and television reports to a Parliamentary inquiry. However, the issue was absent from a particular section of the British print media: the right wing tabloids. This demonstrates again how there is a different demand for stories on migration from distinct press outlets. Emotional and passionate experiences of migrants can help to bring a story to life for a broad audience, but it is much more difficult to make that story cut across and resonate with multiple newspapers.

### **4.3 The challenge of victimhood**

As noted here, there were some notable successes at including the voices and experiences of migrants in the British print press in the run up to the 2015 General Election. But it is also true that journalists largely searched for, and demanded, a narrow range of experiences that ‘fit’ specific stories and editorial lines. Many of the stakeholders that we interviewed noted that in the run-up to and period immediately after the 2015 General Election there was a notable increase in media interest in the stories of migrants who were in some way ‘victims’ of conflict, traffickers, the failure of EU policymakers or ‘the system’ more generally. For those who have been working to address the absence of migrant voices and experiences in the British media this has been an important development, and one that surely must be largely welcomed. This development does, however, also raise a number of concerns which are worthy of reflection.

Firstly, **there is an issue of capacity within the sector** to provide journalists with access to individuals who are prepared to speak, often within short time frames, only or mostly about their personal experiences where these involve trauma and distress. We found evidence that some people who decide to share their experiences with the media find the process unsettling, because they may be required to relive uncomfortable memories or feel that their perspective is misrepresented.

**“ Even the more positive media coverage on Mediterranean, Calais and so on, I have an issue that it is overwhelmingly about images of people behind fences, in trucks, drowning, nearly drowning. It is overwhelmingly victim, victim, victim. It is somehow subconsciously the sense that they are people with nothing and nothing to give or offer. These people are, in fact, doctors and lawyers ”**

**(Stakeholder)**

“ It is overwhelming whenever a new story breaks. There have been five occasions in the past few days that I got an email or a phone conversation with not just the UK media but even the Washington Post ask me to find someone who came from Libya via a leaky boat and whether I do it within the next three hours. It is absolutely in constant demand ”

(Stakeholder)

“ The media needs to understand that it's not easy when you just fled from a war, then you come and exposing your life and story in front of complete strangers and foreigners. It's not an easy thing to do. For us, there is a lot of preparation, psychological preparation. We said, 'Look, you know what, you're here. You're safe. We want you to tell your story because we owe it to all those people who are still there.' There is a lot of psychology there. ”

(Stakeholder)

“ I have a very bad experience with media. When they interviewed me, they promise me like this, like that but when it came out, it was not like that. It stigmatized me to meet somebody from the media ”

(Migrant, London)

“ It is emotionally stressful to me and I don't want to remember what I went through, I have been in the UK one year and I am still waiting for my decision, I am away from my family, sometimes I feel newspapers are taking advantage of the suffering of the vulnerable situations of refugees and asylum seekers who are in desperate situation to come here, seeking safety and fleeing war, when I do the interviews, I feel they get benefit from that... it's a positive, but [not] for me, it's my psychological effect of this situation, I try to avoid everything to do with asylum seekers and refugees, I have had enough ”

(Migrant, Glasgow)

Secondly, there are some concerns that inclusion of migrant voices and experiences predominantly within a humanising frame **reinforces dominant stereotypes of migrants as ‘victims’ in ways that may not be helpful in the longer term.** In particular this may undermine public understanding of migrant contribution and increase concerns about the impact on public services.

Finally, some of the people we interviewed suggested that **giving a voice to migrants as victims relied too heavily on emotional reactions** which do not necessarily contribute to a balanced and well-informed public and political debate on migration, nor to good policy making. Personal and emotional stories may well be effective at inspiring empathy among an audience, but they can also emphasise exceptional circumstances, obscuring the evidence on the true scale of migration and its impact on British life. In a context where the number of migrants living in the UK is vastly over-estimated, what is needed is balanced and reliable information on the normal, everyday reality of migration and migrant lives. We return to this issue in our conclusions.

#### 4.4 Silencing the migrant as ‘villain’

The previous section has highlighted how there has been a prevalent representation of migrants as ‘victims’ with particular experiences which deserve to be heard. migration which relates to a larger proportion of the newspaper articles that we studied: the representation of the migrant as a ‘villain’, as a threat to the British economy

However, there is another aspect to the framing of and to society more generally. This representation matters because villain frames rarely include the voices of migrants themselves, having the power to silence the migrant and undermine any recognition or acknowledgment of the contribution that migrants make.

**“ I’ve never felt being represented myself. I never felt that the migrant voice being represented by media. Sometimes, I felt that if they are being represented, it is in a bad way ” (Migrant, London)**

As was noted above, **the vast majority (85%) of the articles that we analysed made no direct reference to migrant voices.** The newspapers most likely to publish articles on immigration without including a migrant perspective were The Sun and The Daily Mail, as well as the broadsheet Daily Telegraph. As can be seen in Figure 6 a large proportion of these articles employed ‘villain’ frames, viewing migration as a process to be limited and controlled, as a burden on services and communities and migrants as competing with local populations for jobs and services. In other words migrant voices were less likely to be present in stories which tended towards more negative views of migration and migrants.

**“ I think the sector is, too often, focused, on bringing people forward who have had a tragic experience rather than an empowering them to talk about the contribution that they have made. This is in order to put a balance back in. [But] it’s not the sympathy of the supporters that we need. It’s already there. It’s about how you take the relevant experience to a place where most reasonable person could think, ‘Oh, that could be me. That could be a friend of mine. That could be the mum that I saw at school gates ” (Stakeholder)**

This finding is nothing new. A number of existing studies have shown how political elites can employ immigration as a rhetorical ‘meta-issue’, associating it with a range of other problems (see, for example Rydgren 2008, McMahon 2015). This could also be seen in the run-up to the 2015 General Election when issues associated with housing, healthcare and schools were represented as being the direct – and inevitable – consequence of migration. Such an association formed an important part of these ‘villain’ frames, suggesting that migrants were a burden, that they competed for scarce resources or that migration was out of control. **We were able to find a quotation or migrant perspective in only less than 5% of articles presenting these frames or issues.**

### Immigration linked to two-thirds of new homes

**The Daily Telegraph, 29th April 2015**

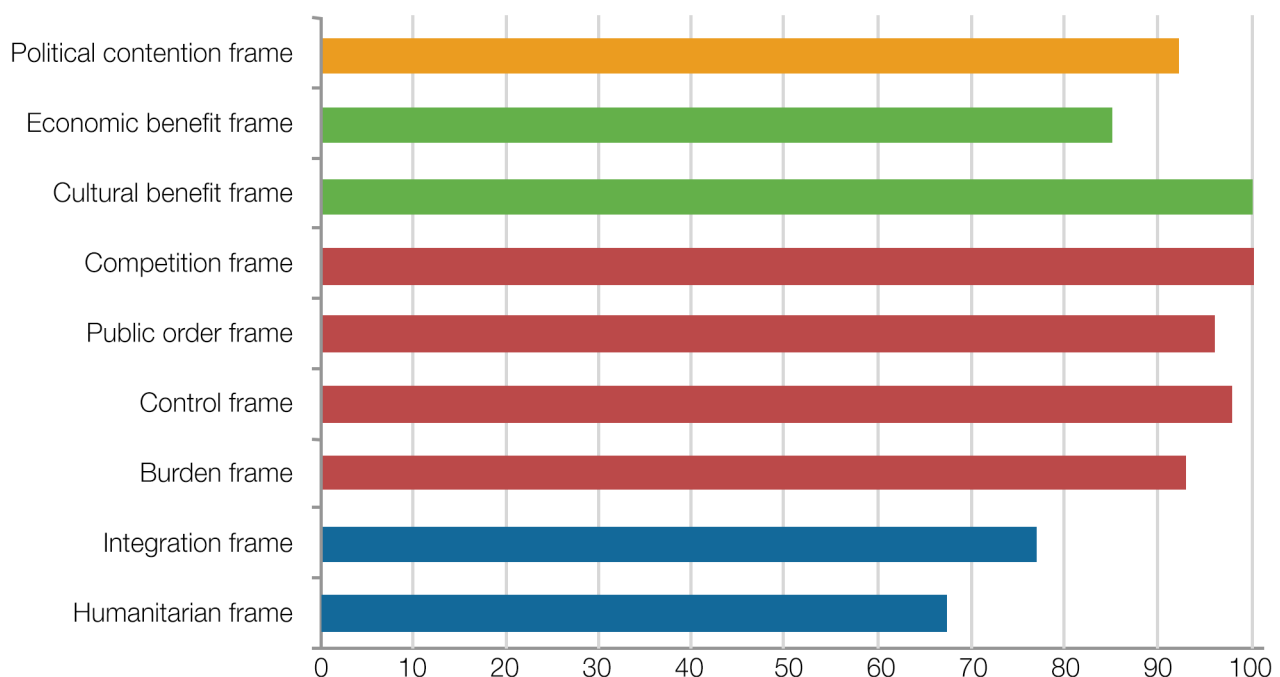
Across the country, most of the additional households are nowadays due to immigration. It is surely obvious that, a major reduction in immigration is essential to reduce the acute pressure on housing which we are now facing.

### MR MILIBAND, RUSSELL BRAND AND A SICK JOKE

**Daily Mail, 29th April 2015**

Is it any wonder we have a housing crisis, forcing up prices and rents, while intolerable pressure has built up on the NHS, schools and other public services?

**Figure 6. Framing migration articles without migrant voices in British newspapers (% of each frame)**





A perception that the British media is largely negative in its representation of migration and present migrants as ‘villains’ was shared by the people who participated in this research. Indeed, it was often the negative stories that stuck in peoples’ minds more than the positive ones. This may illustrate how being portrayed as a villain in public debate can have a damaging impact on migrants’ sense of belonging in Britain. In particular, there were three main themes mentioned.

**“ People that understand what is the reality of the immigrants, how they work hard, how they contribute to the society. They don’t talk anything about that ”**  
(Migrant, London)

Firstly, focus group participants commented on the **failure of the British press to acknowledge the contribution made by migrants to the British economy and society more generally.**

More than this they felt that they were represented as a threat to British society and as criminals who are taking resources to which they are not entitled.

Secondly, many expressed the view that **migrants were used as pawns in a political game,** especially in the context of a General Election campaign. The positioning of migrants as ‘villains’ to be attacked and vilified was viewed as an important aspect of this process, epitomised by Nigel Farage’s comments about denying foreign sufferers of AIDs access to the NHS.

Finally, **many migrants lamented their exclusion from debates on housing, healthcare and schools.** These issues are, after all, ones which directly impact on them as well as on the native population. Migrants told us that they had opinions on these issues and did not want to be invited to comment only on their migration experiences. Migration was an important aspect of their lives and identities but it was not the only issue affecting them. This raises

important questions about whether it is possible to reflect the complex array of views and perspectives on issues that are bound to arise in our modern society. In this situation, a ‘balanced debate’ will not simply position migrants as either ‘victims’ or ‘villains’ but will welcome a mixture of views from different nationality, ethnic, class and other groups.

#### **4.5 Migration – and migrants - as a ‘normal’ part of British society**

As noted so far, the findings of our research suggest that whilst there certainly are opportunities for migrants to have their voices heard in the media, this is often shaped and positioned in a particular way which emphasises their status as victims. Migration is thus still framed as extraordinary and involving extraordinary individuals and stories, despite the fact that migration is an increasingly everyday part of British life. As with most of us, the majority of migrants lead lives which are fairly normal and not particularly newsworthy. Their migration experience may not be a key or significant feature of their identity. Or it might just be seen as another characteristic to be shared, but not shown off or emphasised, with their neighbours.

**“ I think it should be about everything, because I am living here, my body is here, my mind is here. It should be normal. That makes us feel welcome if they ask us about anything ”** (Migrant, Glasgow)

A public debate on migration which focuses above all on the numbers of arrivals and a desire to control and lower the size of the migrant population is unable to reflect this everyday reality. In fact, as we have seen in the previous section, vocal criticisms of migrants as villains can cause damage to the relationships between those from migrant and non-migrant backgrounds. The challenge, then, is how to encourage, persuade and support the British

media to reflect the varied and diverse everyday reality of life in a society of migrants and migration without emphasising exceptionalism or reflecting stereotypes.

## **London Catholics celebrate diversity and call for fair treatment of migrants**

**The Guardian, 4th May 2015**

Derogatis looked down at her 16-month-old daughter, Eileen, asleep in her arms. “She’s got an Italian mother, a Brazilian father, and she was born in the UK. With an Irish name. I think she’s very much part of modern London.”

**“ The challenge for us is how we use the other people whose stories are not being heard at the moment and how to be more proactive in pitching them to the media so that we get a wider range of voices instead of us just waiting for the phone ring. It rings often at the moment but it is important that we have a wider diversity. The challenge is to keep trying to prevent it from becoming ‘if you want a European, you want a poor Eastern European who is working a low-skilled job. If you want a migrant, you want a sob story, a victim story.’ We understand that it’s what people want but we want to try to twist it a bit or get more opportunities to get the success stories in. There are people from different nationalities too ” (Stakeholder)**

## **THE LIZ JONES COLUMN**

**Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, 8th March 2015**

Immigrants oil the wheels (or, in my case after the wax, the legs) of this country. We might want to import only doctors and lawyers, but without the petrol-pump attendants, car-park valets, live-in carers (my mums were African, African, African, then an amazing fortysomething Latvian who left her own children behind to live-in full-time without, for the first few years, a wi-fi connection), manicurists and hotel staff, this country would grind to a halt.

Efforts have been made already to attempt to achieve a balanced debate along the lines of that we have described. One example of these efforts to present migrants and migration as a normal part of British society was the ‘I Am an Immigrant’ poster campaign, led by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) with a wide range of other organisations under the auspices of the Movement Against Xenophobia (MAX). As part of the campaign, fifteen people were chosen as the ‘faces’ for posters which displayed their contributions to British society. The posters were crowd-funded and then displayed at 400 tube stations in London and 550 national rail stations across the country during April 2015. The posters were also promoted through social media and a dedicated website which provided other migrants the opportunity to submit their own photos and contributions.

**“ I know that a campaign may not be exciting news but the media was interested in it. It was different. As a media project coming from the migrants, migrant sector, the Movement Against Xenophobia, it was really important that we’re doing something proactive ” (Stakeholder)**

## The crowdfunded campaign to help immigrants tell their stories

**The Guardian, 16th February 2015**

Something interesting has been happening in the days since the Movement Against Xenophobia, an umbrella group run through the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, and comprising 113 organisations, began seeking support for a campaign to focus on the other side of the story ... It plans to run a poster campaign with photos - taken by a Vogue photographer - depicting ordinary migrants, and a few not so ordinary, who contribute to British life. This seems like a useful corrective to the normally poisonous narrative ... The hitherto silent given voice.

## 'If a politician blames migrants, lots of people will believe this is true'

**The Independent, 1st May 2015**

Nazek Ramadan knows what it is like to feel unwanted in Britain. The director of Migrant Voice, the organisation fighting back against anti-immigrant rhetoric in the run-up to the election ... The organisation is responsible for the "I Am An Immigrant" posters springing up on billboards across the country which promote the achievements and contributions of foreigners to Britain

A similar approach to 'normalising' migration as a part of British society can be seen in The Guardian in March 2015, when large parts of the paper were dedicated to migration and, more specifically, telling the short stories of 100 migrants from a range of countries and backgrounds. The piece commented on the potentially negative implications of the migration debate at the time, stating that 'as many of the voices we publish in G2 today show, it is very easy to let even the most talented people making the most prominent contribution feel unwanted' (The Guardian, 24th March 2015). The feature did not choose to

present migrants as victims, but instead concentrate on the everyday experiences of people who have moved to Britain and ways that these result in understanding and a sense of 'mutual obligation' with communities that are already here.

## Immigrants in their own words: Noel Dandes

**The Guardian, 24th March 2015**

I have a steady routine now. I work as a teacher, live with my partner (we are actually moving into a one-bedroom flat soon, which will cost us as much as a house for six back home), see my friends as often as possible, read as many books as I can on the tube and write all the time.

I think life in the UK has its advantages and disadvantages, much like life anywhere else.

## Immigrants in their own words: Alpha

**The Guardian, 24th March 2015**

I pay taxes, participate socially and culturally and even enjoy fish and chips doused in vinegar. I am slowly learning not to mistake polite invitations for genuine friendships.

The examples cited above are not unique but they do represent clear examples of efforts to develop a new approach to the ways in which we discuss migration and the lives of migrants who live in Britain. They do not present migrants as victims or villains, but rather as members of society who contribute and share everyday life with the rest of us. Whether they will be successful in the long-term remains to be seen.



swelling UK growth  
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# Migrants

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The official economy  
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**“ You are only a migrant until you do something good, then you become a real person. So we no longer see you as a migrant, now you’re kind of one of us, now you’re okay ”**

**(Migrant, Glasgow)**

**“ Any articles that I came across were showing migrants in a negative light and concentrated on issues that are associated with the minority of migrants such as those who come illegally or sponge off of the government. They never took into consideration the migrants that lead normal lives here, it was always the extreme that was represented in the media, normal people like us, studying or working, are never represented which is why I think migrants are seen in a negative light. The majority of us are normal people leading normal lives, but we aren’t shown or taken into consideration ”** (Migrant, Glasgow)

**“ Migration is a complex issue, it’s not a monolithic issue. Migrant voices can help to illustrate the complexity of migration but the image of the migrant is often one of victim or perpetrator. Migrants who are economic contributors or academic experts are no longer viewed as migrants. Their migration status somehow disappears or becomes less important ”**

**(Migrant, Glasgow)**

**“ What I thought is that they are looking for stereotypical migrants. If you’re not a scrounger or any of the stuff that they were describing you as, then they are not telling your story ”**

**(Migrant, London)**

## 5. Towards an alternative framing paradigm

Our research raises important questions about the ways in which migration and migrants are represented in the British print press, the extent to which migrant voices and experiences can be heard and the how the perspectives and voices offered by migrants are represented and framed. We conclude by considering the implications of our research for ongoing efforts to create spaces for a range of migrant voices and perspectives to be heard.

### 5.1 Who is a 'migrant'?

The evidence presented so far urges us to reflect on the way in which the 'migrant' is defined and framed in the British print press. Both Migrants in our focus groups and the stakeholders we interviewed expressed frustration with a perceived tendency of the media to engage with migrant voices and experiences only in the context of the humanitarian and integration frames i.e. as victims or people for whom the immigration system 'does not work'. This has several consequences.

Firstly, **migration and the experiences of migrants are largely represented as 'exceptional' rather than as a normal part of contemporary British society.** Many of those who participated in the focus groups observed a lack of interest by the media in the everyday experiences of migrants who work and study in the UK. It was noted that if migrants are, or become, successful they are no longer viewed as 'migrants' and there is less interest in their migration experiences.

Secondly, both migrants and stakeholders alike noted that **the framing of migrants in the British media as either 'victim' or 'villain' means that those migrants who do not conform to these stereotypes are no longer viewed as 'migrants' but are instead defined in terms of their professional skills and experiences.** Wealthy migrants and those who are successful are not labelled as migrants. This contributes to the dehumanisation of migrants who are rarely represented as 'people like us'.

**“ If you are coming in as a highly skilled immigrant who is going to be paid hundreds of thousands of pounds, no one talks about it. If you come as Lakshmi Mittal, the owner of Mittal steel, who lives just down the road from here, he doesn't even need a passport to travel but if you're a poor immigrant, you are at the forefront of the attack ” (Migrant, London)**

### **HENDERSON BOSS ANDREW FORMICA FRETS OVER UK ELECTION - AND GREECE**

**Daily Mail, 7th May 2015**

Andrew Formica, the chief executive of fund manager Henderson, is in no doubt that political uncertainty is having an effect on small investors. Australian-born Formica has himself been pulled by the magnetism of London - albeit if he is an immigrant then he is a rather exalted one who is unlikely to trouble the welfare state.



This tendency to focus on the migrant as ‘villain’ or ‘victim’ is reflected in, and reinforced by, the tendency of journalists to be interested only, or mostly, in certain kinds of migrant voices and experiences. As was noted in the previous section, there is a growing media interest in the personal stories of migrants particularly in the context of the European migration crisis. However, because this interest seeks to portray migrants through a ‘victim’ frame it excludes or ignores the experiences of migrants which are more complex or nuanced. Stakeholders described how they are often approached by journalists trying to establish contact with migrants from particular countries or backgrounds who would be willing to speak, usually at short notice, about their experiences. Where organisations are unable to provide journalists with access to migrants who fit a certain profile or stereotype, or facilitate access to migrants whose experiences do not fit the dominant frames, the journalist may lose interest and go elsewhere.

**“ Before the elections, we had requests from journalists to talk to Romanian and Bulgarian migrants. I told them that we can provide them but when I told them about the professions, academics, dentists, social worker. They said, ‘Do you have one with a normal job?’ I asked, ‘What do you mean by normal job?’ They said, ‘Someone whom the people can relate to, like a cleaner or carer’ ” (Stakeholder)**

**“ They removed me from the article. I guess I don’t fit into the stereotype of a Polish migrant because I have a PhD. I guess there is a certain cultural presentation of what a Polish migrant should be, like a plumber. I think it’s quite important to look at the cultural presentation, what is the imagined idea of what a perfect idea of migrants from certain parts of the world ” (Migrant, London)**

### **5.2 Barriers to a more nuanced approach**

It is clear that there are a number of barriers to a more nuanced representation of migrant voices and experiences in the British printed press. We do not want to suggest that this problem is unique to the issue of migration: rather it is part of a more general tendency within the media to highlight controversial and sensational stories at the expense of in-depth, investigative journalism (Balch and Balabanova 2014). Nonetheless it seems possible that this can take on a particular form in the context of migration where the political interests of the media in gaining and maintaining a readership with particular political allegiances aligns with the need to increase sales and generate advertising revenue. Sensational stories provide a good tool with which to achieve this. It may also drive an emphasis on migration-related stories about criminality, conflict, violence, disaster or scandal (Bennett et al 2013, Gemi et al 2013).

**“ The media doesn’t just write these stories [for nothing], there is a demand, that’s why they write it, people latch on, sensationalist things that are bit of a gossip and a shocker ” (Migrant, Glasgow)**

At the same time it is important to acknowledge that journalists face a number of constraints that influence the stories about which they write and the voices that they decide to include. The pressures of time demand instant (and easy) access to content, but journalists may not have the information and contacts they need to access migrants who are willing to speak about their experiences and perspectives. If they do, then they may face language barriers which require extra time, resources and effort on the part of the journalists to overcome (Gemi et al 2013). A lack of specialists in newsrooms (newspaper reporters are often generalists) may undermine their willingness to approach migrants (Bennett et al 2013, Triandafyllidou 2013). This problem is reinforced by a lack of migrant employees in the newsrooms (Malik 2010, Gemi et al 2013, Markova and McKay 2013).

Together, these factors mean migrant sources can at times be difficult and time-consuming to reach. They may also be seen as less credible than other sources. Research commissioned by Article 19 found that journalists felt that the views of one asylum seeker could not be considered impartial or representative, which meant they were less likely to ask a migrant to comment on a policy debate, in favour of what they perceive to be a more ‘neutral’, official, observer (Buchanan et al 2004). As a result, press releases from the police and government ministries were seen to be more objective and neutral (Bennett et al 2013).

Although migrant-led and other organisations play an important role in facilitating access journalists may also find this process time-consuming and difficult, particularly in the context of modern-day news cycles (Bennett et al 2013). And for the organisations themselves this is a labour-intensive process which may distract from carefully worked out advocacy programmes or other activities for which the organisation is funded (Buchanan et al 2004).

This problem may be exacerbated by the focus on certain categories of migrant or types of experience.

**“ A part of the challenge with reporting this issue is that journalists come out with preconceived ideas on what they want to report and we cannot deliver that. I can deliver you ten different stories but at the moment, I don’t have a Syrian who arrived recently and was given full status but hates it here. I can’t give you a young Eritrean who smuggled himself because there is only like a handful of those. They are all shipped out of London. Those are the challenges of media reporting ” (Stakeholder)**

**“ It’s a lot of work and from the organizational point of view, we don’t even get our name checked. They sometimes even get the name wrong...it’s like we don’t exist. So, there is no acknowledgment of civil society and the importance of civil society in the press ” (Stakeholder)**

At the same time migrants themselves may be reluctant to talk about their experience because of trauma, for fear of retaliation, being identified as an asylum seeker, or worries about how speaking out might personally affect them (Gemi et al 2013). Many of those who participated in this research highlighted the particular concerns and anxieties of those who do not have documents and whose status is insecure. Others gave examples of people they knew for whom they believed there had been negative consequences of speaking with the media.

**“It is hard to bear your soul to someone who is a complete stranger. They are not used to those people and not used to telling their stories. Some come from a culture where you don’t talk about those issues to the media, you hide them. So, if you go through something difficult, it’s not for you to share with to us or the world.”**  
(Stakeholder)

**“The main thing is people are scared. We’ve got lots and lots of stories but people are scared”**  
(Migrant, Birmingham)

**“Migrants are very vulnerable. We just don’t face the media so we have to ask our documented people to face these people”**  
(Migrant, London)

### 5.3 Supporting migrants to tell their stories

There is growing recognition among migrant-led and other organisations concerned about the ways in which migration issues are understood and debated in the UK that the voices of migrants themselves are an important part of the story and that they need to be supported and empowered to take ownership of the issues that directly affect them.

But ensuring that the voices of migrants from a wide range of backgrounds are represented in the British media is not a simple or straightforward process. Organisations working with migrants to amplify their voices and experiences are increasingly trying to provide journalists with access to a greater range of voices and experiences but this is laborious work. Our research confirms that many migrants are anxious about speaking to journalists or fear the consequences of doing so. Others face practical issues in communicating their experiences, such as memories of trauma or limited English language skills. Many migrant-led and other organisations working to facilitate access to the media and to create spaces for alternative voices to be heard, spend significant time and energy briefing and debriefing migrants who have indicated that they are willing to talk to the media. The purpose of this briefing is not to tell them what to say but rather to provide the necessary support and guidance they need to be able to communicate their experiences clearly. Their work is often invisible or goes unacknowledged.

“It’s still a big deal. Sitting with someone else after the interview and analysing it makes a big difference for people, in terms of whether they want to do it again. It’s good for someone to tell them ‘yeah, that is spot on way to say it. It’s great’ People enjoy it so we always try to do that” (Stakeholder)

The findings of our research suggest that **organisations working with migrants to engage with the media will need to be supported to continue this work.** It is also clear that they will need to coordinate their efforts in order to maximise on the opportunities presented by the media and be able to proactively (rather than reactively) engage with journalists. This would provide an opportunity to reframe the representation of migrants and migration and in turn ensure a more accurate reflection of the lived experiences of migrants in Britain today. We found some evidence of increased coordination and collaboration within and between organisations including the development of a more professional communications infrastructure. The successful engagement of the media with the campaign to end indefinite immigration detention provides the clearest example of the effectiveness of this collaboration in practice.

However, **successful engagement with the media will also require migrant-led organisations to extend the focus of their activities and areas of interest beyond migration and the specific experiences of migrants themselves.** A

number of stakeholders pointed to the fact that it is easier to interest the media in migration issues where these issues clearly have an impact on wider British society. This suggests that in order to engage the British print press – and in turn the British public – in a more balanced understanding of migration issues and the impact of migrants on life in Britain, the debate needs to be broadened to include issues of social justice, fairness and human rights for all.

“Sometimes, there is a struggle to see beyond migration, which is understandable if you’re working on a day to day basis. For example, the right to rent, we are trying to translate that over to explain how the people who own these properties who will be affected, the landlords who are over 65s with a little bit of cash who invested in properties for their children, their grandchildren. If you can set the narrative to that, that will reach more people.” (Stakeholder)

The influence of migrant-led and other organisations on the content and framing of stories in the media is not simply a question of giving journalists what they want here and now. It is also about understanding how the media works and providing different newspapers with access to a range of migrant sources and experiences which resonate with its existing themes and the interests of its readers. Understanding how the media works and the interests, readership and political leanings of different newspapers makes it more likely that a pitch is successful, in the case of a proactive story, and that migrant experiences and voices are not misrepresented or left out when organisations are asked to react to particular issues.

“One of the biggest learning in our project is that there is a lot more space for constructive and positive stories in neutral and sceptical outlets than the conventional wisdom has it on the liberal side of the debate. Those stories have a particular sort of forms and frames. In short, there are stories that work for us and work for them” (Stakeholder)

## 5.4 In conclusion

Our research has examined the extent to which migrant voices and experiences were able to inform the reporting of migration issues in the British press in the run-up to the 2015 General Election, when migration was widely anticipated to be one of the most salient and controversial issues on the political agenda. Drawing on the evidence gathered, we have tried to answer the questions presented at the beginning of the report. Were the voices and experiences of migrants present in media reporting on migration issues or were migrants 'just those people being talked about'? And if migrants were able to have a voice, how were their experiences and perspectives represented and framed?

The answers for to these questions are relatively straightforward.

Although many of those who participated in the research told us that migration was less of an issue during the election than they had expected or feared, it was not absent from the debate; indeed a significant amount of space in the British print press was dedicated to the topic. Migration issues were of interest to both tabloid and broadsheet publications alike and were addressed by writers on all points of the political spectrum.

The findings of our research confirm a widely held perception among many of those working with migrants or concerned about the ways the media reports on them; the British print press is often hostile towards migrants and migration issues. Nearly half (46%) of all stories could be described as framing migration as a threat to British society and the economy by positioning migrants as 'villains'. This villain frame argued that migration and migrants were a problem to be stopped or reduced in order to protect life in Britain from any negative impact. We do not in any way want to downplay the negative impact of these stories on the public debate on migration or on the lives of migrants themselves for whom the consequences are deeply felt. These stories 'silence' the contribution made by migrants to Britain's economy and society and leads them to feel marginalised and

excluded: that they are 'just those people being talked about'. This silencing is reflected in the absence of migrant voices and experiences in migration stories. 85% of the articles from our sample had no migrant voices or experiences referenced at all and this fell to just 5% where migrants were represented as a threat.

But it is also important to acknowledge that migration stories in the British press in the run-up to the 2015 General Election were not entirely negative and exclusionary.

In over a third (38%) of the articles that were analysed, migrants were presented as 'victims', and represented as being in need, or deserving, of support or changes to the legal, economic or social environment in Britain. This would, in turn, help them to improve their situation and fully contribute to British society. The voices and experiences of migrants were much more likely to be included in these kinds of stories, both as vignettes to illustrate the points being made but also as the focus of the story itself. They can be seen most clearly in coverage of the campaign to end indefinite immigration detention and in coverage of the Mediterranean migration crisis.

This finding supports an emerging body of evidence that journalists are more likely to actively seek personal stories on which to report where these are associated with trauma, loss and grief which can be presented within a victim frame. The victim frame has the potential to engage the public in a more empathetic and compassionate migration narrative, as illustrated in September when images of the body of three-year old Alan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach propelled the European migration crisis onto the political agenda (Vis et al 2015). Many of those who participated in this research identified the Mediterranean migration crisis as a turning point in the interest and willingness of the British print media to engage the voices and experiences of migrants and as creating the potential for more positive stories on migration to gain traction.

**“ Since the start of the year, I felt that there was a slight shift in the media’s interest in telling migrants’ stories because of all the stuff in the Mediterranean and Syria. I expected the kind of pre-election hoo haa about migrants. However, because of the particular events happening in Europe, Calais and so on, suddenly there is a different angle to it. It’s not simply that the ‘numbers are too high’. The interest of the media is more on the personal stories, asking ‘Do you have someone with this or that story?’ ” (Stakeholder)**

We do not want to downplay or underestimate the importance of these stories. Victimhood can be beneficial: migrant stories may be more likely to get into the press when they include emotional, passionate personal stories. But the focus on the personal stories and experiences of migrants only, or predominantly, within a victim frame can also be problematic for a number of reasons.

We found evidence that some people who decide to share their experiences with the media find the process unsettling, because they may be required to relive uncomfortable memories or feel that their perspective is misrepresented. Some of the people we interviewed also suggested that giving a voice to migrants as victims relied too heavily on emotional reactions which did not necessarily contribute to a balanced and well-informed public and political debate on migration, nor to good policy making. Finally, a narrow view of migrants as victims may reinforce dominant stereotypes in ways that are not helpful in the longer term. This is because such stories communicate a message that migrants repeatedly need help and support from their host society, potentially undermining public solidarity. There may be less, not more, interest in other more positive migrant stories and experiences. If migrants are, or become, successful they appear to lose the label ‘migrant’ altogether, in turn reducing the likelihood that wide range of migrant voices

and experiences will be heard. Indeed, public opinion on migration in the UK has continued to be largely negative today despite the presence of these victim voices in the press during the election campaign.

Increased interest in migrant voices in victim frames appears to have played an important role in increasing the presence of migrant voices in the media, but it has done so in ways that do not reflect the varied backgrounds and experiences of migrants living in the UK. The challenge then is to find ways of engaging the British media in the complexity and nuances of migrant experiences and backgrounds, of moving beyond the framing of the migrant as either ‘victim’ or ‘villain’.

We do not want to suggest that the solutions are simple or straightforward.

The relationship between political debate, public attitudes and the media is complex. Change will require all of those with an interest in developing a more balanced migration debate to critically reflect on their role in the shaping the ways in which migration is understood and how they engage with, and frame, the voices and experiences of migrants within that debate. This includes political leaders, journalists and those working on the ground to support migrants to tell their stories and to engage the media – and others – to hear what they have to say.



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**“ Over the last two to three years it has become clear that the defining feature of any successful movement is led by the people that it affects. But it’s a slow process... At the moment it all seems very fragile. We just haven’t got enough talent in the pipeline of confident English language speakers.... At the moment we are mostly looking for individuals to fit a particular story rather than letting migrants have a proactive voice ” (Stakeholder)**